

## THEORY OF SUPERVISION:

- Supervision is getting the job done through others.
- Good supervision must include personal trust, respect and confidence between employees and supervisors. This kind of good supervision will result in an increased desire to work.
- Pressure on the supervisor from one side: management wants the work done without problems.



- Pressure on the supervisor from the other side: employees want clean, fair, and consistent leadership.
- Delegation is trusting another person to do a job for which you are responsible.
- To delegate successfully, the supervisor must do the following:
  - 1) Make sure that the employee agrees to do the work.
  - 2) Tell the employee how the work will be checked. Tell the employee how to report completion.
  - 3) Make sure that everyone involved knows that the employees has the authority to carry out the work.
  - 4) Review who does what.
- To delegate successfully, the supervisor verifies the employees acceptance of responsibility, specifies a method of accountability, and establishes authority equal to accountability.
- On the supervisor's side, supervisors are always accountable for the work of their units. Supervisors are also accountable for the effectiveness of their delegations.
- On the subordinate's side: subordinates accept responsibility for work assignments and are then accountable for those assignments. It is the job of the subordinate to accept assignments and to report on progress in designated ways.
- In all delegation situations for which you are accountable, make sure that you know the answer to this question:

*WHO DOES WHAT?*

## **DEFINITION OF LEADERSHIP:**

Leadership is the ability to influence the actions of others.

- Supervisors can influence their work units in many different ways. Different situations require different approaches. Supervisors need a variety of Leadership styles to meet different situations. Ask yourself the following questions: When is it appropriate to get tough? When is it appropriate to be easy going? When is it appropriate to let individuals or groups work on their own? Supervisors need to learn how to adapt their personal styles to different circumstances.
- The way to succeed as a leader is to talk to people about your style choices. Tell them why it is necessary for you to get tough in some circumstances, and to be easy going in others. If you explain your choice of style and ask people to follow your lead, they will usually cooperate. If, on the other hand, you are not willing to make the effort to explain yourself; you are headed for trouble. This trouble will take the form of confusion, resentment, misunderstandings and personality conflicts.
- Attitudes of supervisors can be seen as a range of styles, ranging from an extreme use of authority by the supervisor or manager to an extreme area of freedom for the subordinates.
- Decision making is choosing actions from available alternatives to achieve a result.
- The Problem Solving Process:
  - define the problem (compare the present situation to the ideal condition)
  - analyze the causes of the problem (from every angle)
  - generate potential solutions (brainstorm)
  - select and plan solutions
  - implement solutions
  - evaluate solution
- Supervisors will build work teams in ways that promote employees involvement. Supervisors will encourage and support team work.
- Supervisors will ensure that all needed communications (messages, instructions, assignments, requests, etc.) get thru to their employees.
- Whenever possible, supervisors will correct unacceptable employee behavior by face to face verbal counseling.
- Counseling is a face to face conversation between the supervisor and the employee that is designed to correct unacceptable employee behavior.

- Counseling can make an employee aware that a certain behavior is unacceptable at work. The employee may be innocently unaware that his or her behavior is not appropriate.
- Early counseling can save the time of trying to correct a problem that has gotten out of hand. It can also uncover issues that are causing problems of which the supervisor is unaware.
- Workplace problems should be solved at the lowest possible level. This means maintaining employee productivity and morale thru normal communications and coaching. If normal communications are not enough to correct a problem, your work unit should know that you will use counseling and that you have the skill to use it in a non-punitive manner.
- The counseling interview should focus on changing the behavior rather than on blaming the employee.
- Counseling can benefit all parties by awarding the severe consequences of unacceptable behavior that are part of DISCIPLINE. Discipline can involve demotion, and dismissal. The supervisor does not carry out discipline and should never threaten an employee with discipline in a personal way. Discipline is carried out by the Employee Relations Office at a department level.
- The supervisor may be called on to recommend discipline for specific acts of misconduct. Supervisors should let employees know when, and if, specific unacceptable behaviors could lead to discipline.
- Sometimes employee performance declines to a point where the supervisor must take action. The supervisor must decide when this point has been reached. Signs that employees need counseling could include the following:
  - increased absenteeism (unexplained or unexcused)
  - unsatisfactory productivity
  - sloppy work, carelessness or accidents
  - inability to get along with supervisors or fellow employees
  - tardiness in reporting to work
  - complaint from the public
  - unpredictable, inappropriate or unexplained changes in behavior or appearance
  - unexplained absence from the work site during the workday
- The face to face counseling interview is a necessary step in the counseling process. A counseling memo documents the occurrence of a counseling interview. The memo never replaces the interview.

- The supervisor has two general concerns in conducting a counseling interview:
  - supporting the employee while he or she recognizes and seeks to solve his or her problem.
  - stating or reaffirming the rules, policies, needs and obligations of the agency and the work unit.
  
- The rules of counseling came from contracts and agreements between the State of New York and the labor unions that represent employee bargaining units. Supervisors must observe the rules of counseling. This is an area of supervisor - subordinate contract that is not open to **improvisation**.
  
- The key steps in a counseling interview are:
  - Hold the session in private during a time when you will not be rushed.
  - Explain directly the exact nature of the concern. Make clear what has been observed and why it is important.
  - Allow the employee the opportunity to tell his/her work story, making sure that you hear him/her out.
  - Assure the employee of your interest. If appropriate, offer your assistance in resolving the problem.
  - Reach an understanding on corrective actions both of you will take. Set a definite follow up date.
  
- The purposes of all Performance Evaluation Systems are:
  - to let people know where they stand
  - to identify training and development needs, and
  - to provide information for organizational decisions.
  
- All Performance Evaluation Systems have the following 3 steps in common:
  - 1) Performance Planning - Defining specific tasks that are part of the employees job, setting measurable standards for how those tasks are to be performed, and communicating expectations about task performance to the employee and to management.
  - 2) Performance Development - working with the employee to allow him or her to achieve competent performance of job tasks. This could involve coaching, On the Job Training, redesigning tasks, solving problems, and arranging opportunities for practice and / or training.

- 3) Performance Appraisal - Rating the employee's job performance by comparing actual performance to agreed on standards. Review of the first line supervisor's rating by upper management. Communication of that rating to the employee.

There are many areas of work in which supervisors will need the guidance of Department and NYS policy. This resource listing will help you find policies in the DOT Manual of Administrative Procedures (MAP), and in union contract articles, as well as various bulletins.

# KEY POINTS TO REVIEW

## SUPERVISORY ISSUES

1. Remember that human resources are a manager's most important resources.
2. Try not to make promises, but if you do, make sure you keep them.
3. Keep your wits about you. Employees will react to situations dependent on how you are handling them. Don't lose your temper or argue.
4. Make the time to address issues that need to be addressed and be patient.
5. Be consistent and fair.
6. Hear employees out-provide them with an opportunity to explain their actions. "Cooling off" periods should not be too long before disciplinary actions. Gather any needed information as quickly as possible.
7. Don't underreact, or overreact, react appropriately to the situation.
8. Remember employees have feelings and should be treated with respect.
9. Should you make a mistake, admit it. Never place the blame on your staff, or make excuses.
10. Work with staff to develop their potentials.
11. Promote cooperation, coordination and teamwork.
12. Be sincere in praising, don't over or underpraise.
13. Ask for employees' input and advice - no one knows their jobs better than they do.
14. Do not say, "As a friend, I would..."-you are a manager.
15. Stand up for your employees and back them to the hilt.

## COUNSELING/DISCIPLINE

1. Behavior problems can be due to: poor attitudes, inadequate training, personality conflicts, and personal problems.
2. Practice active listening, and provide feedback as to what employee is saying.

## PLANNING

1. Set reasonable and measurable objectives, assess available resources, develop contingency plans, and coordinate.
2. Measure goals and objectives in terms of specific and clear quantity, quality and time frame.
3. Clearly defined objectives are yardsticks for decision making.
4. Assess resources including: people, finances, equipment/tools, information/supplies, approaches/methods, and the critical element of time.
5. Develop contingency plans and consider the following when deciding on a best one: objectives, side effects, flexibility, complexity, and risk/reward ratio.
6. Clearly communicate defined goals, objectives and expected results. Most importantly, communicate changes fully and on a continual basis.

## DELEGATION

1. Effective delegation includes defined objectives, timely feedback, tolerance, and corrective actions.
2. Delegation is shared responsibility, not passed off responsibility.
3. Delegate by assigning duties, granting appropriate levels of authority to carry out those duties, and create contract to perform.
4. Common barriers to delegation include: lack of confidence, lack of appropriate planning, managers loss of job satisfaction (technical aspects), feelings of inadequacy/insecurity, fear of making errors.
5. Provide continual feedback on performance.

## PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

1. Identify potential problems, possible causes, and preventive actions.
2. Decisions should be made by the employee with the most knowledge on the issues-importance of granting authority to carry out assignments.
3. Gather the appropriate amount of facts (often time related) and assess risks.

## COMMUNICATION

1. The objectives of communication are: to be understood, understand others, promote action, and be accepted.
2. Common barriers to effective communication: differences in perceptions/expectations, close-ended (one-way) process, jargon, stereotypes, prejudgments, emotions, actions versus Words.
3. Handle rumors carefully. Be forthcoming, honest and truthful. If you have no information, don't speculate as it increases the impact of the rumor.

## MOTIVATION

1. Employee motivation is not something managers have power over or can control. Your role is to create a motivational climate.
2. Motivation climate is comprised of: the job itself, the manager, and the related activities.
3. Developing a motivational climate includes: acting as an appropriate role model, involving employees in problem solving and decision making, support decisions and present in ways that it will be appropriately received, and using effective communication.
4. Try to provide employees with the whole picture of the project.
5. Make time to listen.
6. Provide opportunities for employee suggestions, innovations, etc.

7. Support employee's career development.
8. Keep employees abreast of issues that impact their jobs.
9. Invite a variety of different opinions and do so in a positive manner.

## **INTERPERSONAL RELATIONS**

1. Don't have favorites, look for good points and take an interest in all employees.
2. Maintain self-control, remain poised, especially during stressful times.
3. Promote employee involvement and suggestions for improvement/alternatives.
4. Watch what you say and how you say it. Content, style, tone and pace provide clues from which people draw conclusions.
5. Be discreet. Don't use or participate in ethnic humor or sarcasm. Keep confidential information just that.
6. Hone your timing skills.
7. Good interpersonal relationships result in high morale, productivity, and ease of management.

## RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SUPERVISOR

| <b>TO EMPLOYEES</b> |   | <b>TO MANAGEMENT</b> |   |
|---------------------|---|----------------------|---|
| 1                   | Set the example. Be a leader and not driver.                                  | 1                    | Become familiar with and carry out the policies of management.                          |
| 2                   | Treat employees with complete respect. Be friendly, but firm when necessary.  | 2                    | Conform to security regulations.  |
| 3                   | Explain and carry out the policies, procedures, and regulations of the agency | 3                    | Seek ways to economize. Avoid waste and Protect Government property.                    |
| 4                   | Assure proper training for his or her Job                                     | 4                    | Identify training needs, assure adequate training, and maintain a competent work group. |
| 5                   | Provide opportunities for development and assist in every way possible.       | 5                    | Maintain tools, equipment, and work area in efficient working condition.                |
| 6                   | Praise accomplishment and be sincere. Criticism is to be given privately.     | 6                    | Encourage and maintain high performance standards.                                      |
| 7                   | Create an awareness of and provide training in safety practices.              | 7                    | Represent employees in matters of appropriate concern.                                  |
| 8                   | Be fair and impartial.  |                      |   |
| 9                   | Use ability and skill as criterion or placement.                              |                      |   |
| 10                  | Acknowledge your own mistakes.  |                      |   |

Basic Supervision

# Dealing with Conflict and Complaints

**NYSDOT**  
**Training Bureau**  
**1997**

## \* Dealing with Conflict Within the Work Team

The Supervisor must decide when to intervene in arguments between team members. Such arguments cannot be allowed to degenerate into open conflict. Here are some guidelines on when to intervene:

1. If the parties don't solve the problem within a reasonable amount of time.
2. If other people start to get involved.
3. If deadlines are not met and productivity suffers.
4. If it looks like the parties can't solve the problem.
5. If asked.
6. If morale suffers.

The Supervisor's own personal conduct will often set a standard for everyone in the team. A leader who allows himself or herself to become angry in an uncontrolled way invites similar behavior by others in the team. Someone who makes ethnic slurs, or sexually harassing comments, suggests to others that such behavior is acceptable.

Supervisors should try to "mediate" conflicts rather than imposing their own point of view. Mediating means helping the contending individuals to work out a solution for themselves. This is always preferable because the parties will gain skills they can use in settling future conflicts.

Here is a checklist you can use in intervening in conflicts:

1. Size up the situation:
  - \*Are there any physical dangers?
  - \*Whose feelings are liable to be hurt?
  - \*Who is involved?
2. Control the physical setting.
  - \*Move the quarrel from public space to private space. This could reduce embarrassment and reduce the need for "face saving.\*"
  - \*Separate conflicting parties.
  - \* Get people to sit down.
3. Speak with people one at a time:
  - \*Start with the one who is most upset.
  - \*Tell the other to wait for his or her turn to speak.
  - \*Use the person's name.

4. Allow those involved to express anger or other emotions.
5. Probe to get precise facts.
6. If future conflicts may occur, ask for suggested solutions within the confines of what is proper and allowable.
7. Get a commitment from both parties concerning future behavior. \*Appeal to reason, team loyalty, and self respect  
  
\*Advise all parties of any possible grounds for discipline
8. Never use derogatory language. Never use ethnic, religious, or sexual or racial references. Avoid using sarcasm or making jokes that could hurt people's feelings.

\* The above material was adapted from Typical Suoervisory Sla71s, by Anton Aboad and from fit C ine Sutservimr s Training of the NYC Fire Department

## \* Dealing with Employee Complaints

Checklist for Supervisors:

1. Give the team member your undivided attention. Maintain eye contact. Avoid interrupting the employee.
2. Ask probing questions to help the team member express his or her point of view. Ask for any evidence or facts that you need to understand the complaint.
3. Be frank and responsive about what you are going to do in response to the complaint. Tell the team member whether you are going to bring the complaint to higher supervision.
4. If appropriate, ask the team member to continue working as assigned pending the outcome of the review of the complaint.
5. Avoid reacting to the complaint in a defensive manner.
7. Don't use sarcastic or offensive language.

## \* Dealing with Complaints from the Public

### Checklist for Supervisors:

1. Give the person your name and note his or her name. Address the person by that name.
2. Take notes on the person's complaint.
3. Tell the person that you will bring the complaint to your supervisor's attention.
4. Give the person the telephone number of your office. Give the person your business card if available.
5. Report the complaint to your supervisor.

\* Both sections above are adapted from Tvoical Supervisory Slips, by Anton Aboud, and from A Supervisor's Guide for Sin 11 Highway Deparhuent Management, by W.J. Mobbs.

# Better Listening

You can't learn anything about a person if you do all the talking. You can't figure out what a member of your team is likely to do by talking of them. Good leaders listen to what team members are saying. They try to learn about the team member: his/her capabilities, preferences, knowledge, motivational drives, attitude. All those factors are vital to the way you lead, and only the team member can tell you.

Learn how to listen. Tips

for good listening:

- \* Maintain eye contact - Look at the person who is talking to you. Nod or make "agreement sounds" when the other person makes a point. Look interested.
- \* Leave pauses, allow silences - Let the other person have time to gather their thoughts and continue. Don't jump in every time there is a brief pause.
- \* Test your understanding of what the other person is saying. Restate or paraphrase. Use phrases Like:  
"So, you're saying that ... "  
"If I understood correctly, you are saying that ... "  
"What do you mean when you say ... ?"  
"Have you really done ... ?"
- \* Encourage questions - Never tell anyone that the question they are asking is stupid. Never tell anyone that they should already know something.
- If you don't know, say so. - Don't answer just to have an answer. When the truth comes out you will lose that person's trust.

## SUPERVISION SAMPLE QUESTIONS - GROUP A

1. Group performance has been declining. It has dropped considerably during the past few months. There have been missed deadlines and failures to meet requirements. You have given the group constant reminders to finish particular tasks on time. In the past, you have had to explain job definitions and responsibilities to get things done.
  - a. Allow the group to formulate its own direction.
  - b. Incorporate group recommendations, but see that objectives are met.
  - c. Redefine roles and responsibilities and supervise carefully.
  - d. Allow group involvement in deciding roles and responsibilities, but don't be too directive.

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2. You have been promoted to a more senior supervisory position. The previous supervisor was usually uninvolved in the daily activities of the subordinate supervisors. However, if requested by a supervisor, she would readily visit any area. The supervisors have run their own departments adequately. Interrelationships among the supervisors are good.
  - a. Let the supervisors direct their own activities.
  - b. Make yourself available for discussion without pushing.
  - c. Clarify your feelings about productivity and do all you can do to help achievement.
  - d. Redefine goals and supervise closely.

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3. You have just been promoted to office supervisor in charge of twelve clerical personnel. (eight typists and four general clerks) The previous supervisor was transferred in part because the office staff was not able to complete their work on schedule. In addition, the office experienced excessive turnover of employees. Some employees have expressed concern about the poor quality of work and the bad attitudes of the clerical staff. Under the previous supervisor, the employees showed little interest in their jobs and generally viewed the office supervisor as a "soft touch."
  - a. Let the group work things out on their own.
  - b. Act quickly and firmly to correct and redirect.
  - c. Involve subordinates in decision making and reinforce good contributions.
  - d. Do what you can to make the group feel important and involved.

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4. Due to changes in structure and procedures, there are some difficulties between some people in your unit. They are all well qualified to do their jobs and for the most part their record is extremely good as far as task accomplishment is concerned. Before the current situation, relationships between members have not been a significant difficulty.
  - a. Examine the need for new practices and try out your solution to this problem with your subordinates.
  - b. Allow group members to work it out themselves.
  - c. Act quickly and firmly to correct and redirect.
  - d. Make yourself available for discussion while providing support for the group.

5. You have taken over a new unit. The previous supervisor ran a very efficient unit, but kept very tight control over the unit and had limited contact with the people in it. You want to maintain a productive situation but would like to begin making the environment a little more "livable."
- Do what you can to make the group feel important and involved.
  - Emphasize the importance of deadlines and tasks.
  - Intentionally do not intervene.
  - Get the group involved in decision making, but see that objectives are met.
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6. Group performance in this unit is high in both quantity and quality. All eight people in this group seem to get along with each other quite well. Although there are four other units doing very similar work, your situation is different because the other supervisors have much more experience than you have. In addition, the highly task-oriented style of the other supervisors fits in better with general agency management. As the supervisor of this unit you feel uncomfortable about not giving the group more definite directions.
- Leave the group alone.
  - Discuss the situation with the group and then initiate necessary changes.
  - Take steps to direct subordinates toward working in a well defined manner.
  - Be supportive in discussing the situation with the group, but not too directive.
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7. You are a new supervisor working in a small department. Your staff includes three clerks. All have a minimum of ten years working experience. Cooperation among these clerks has been decreasing. Recently, performance in your department has been declining, and you have noticed that the clerks are slow in dealing with people at the reception and information desk.
- Leave the clerks alone.
  - Discuss the situation with the three clerks and then initiate necessary changes.
  - Direct the clerks toward maintaining good relations with clients. Have them provide prompt service at the desk.
  - Work with the clerks on how to improve performance.
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8. You have always tried to be supportive and open with all the people in your unit. In almost all cases you have tried to show concern about their welfare. However, they have not been responsive to your friendliness. Performance in your unit is not good currently and could be on a general decline.
- Emphasize the use of uniform procedures and the necessity for task accomplishment.
  - Make yourself available for discussion, but do not push.
  - Talk with subordinates and then set goals.
  - Be careful not to intervene.

## ANSWERS FOR GROUP A QUESTIONS

1. C is the appropriate style, at least in the short run. This group needs an infusion of task behavior and this type of leadership has helped in the past.

The behavior defined in B could be considered later, depending on how the group responds.

**A and D** emphasize relationship behavior that is probably secondary in this situation.

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2. **B** is the most practical answer in that there are occasions where people in the group do need help. Under these conditions answers might put you in a position too remote.

**C and D** suggest more control than may be needed.

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3. **B and C** can both be considered as reasonable choices in this case.

The choice here is dependent on how you treat the accuracy of the perception of the typists. If it is accurate then Q looks reasonable.

Direction and firmness are important here. The fact that the former supervisor was a "soft touch" is a different issue than the obvious need for direction. Therefore, **A and D** are probably not necessary at this moment.

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4. **B** is the most appropriate choice. The people in this group appear to have handled things well in the past. Heavily directive or relationship oriented behavior on your part is probably not appropriate.

**D** is an acceptable choice. It establishes your involvement and reaffirms relationship support behavior. The major concern here would be in creating a dependency relationship by the group on the supervisor. Yet, there are new conditions that warrant your involvement.

**C** might be an overreaction, like the cop involved in a quarrel who suddenly becomes the enemy of the two quarrelers.

You should account for both short run and long run considerations. At some point it is damaging for the supervisor to do nothing. On the other hand, a supervisor needs to realize that adjustment to new procedures requires time. In this instance, we can assume that the employees will work out the relationship by themselves () or with your help <sub>imo.</sub> It would probably be premature to change the practices as suggested in A.

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5. **B** is the best choice as it allows for a gradual change in the operation. The difference in style will not be so dramatic.

**A** is a second choice. Primarily the issue would center on the question "Too much too soon?"

Since the past supervisor emphasized task dimensions and since employees are efficient, you probably don't need to emphasize deadlines (**B**.) If the past supervisor kept very tight control, subordinates might experience lack of intervention (**C**) as weak and passive. If you believe in the importance of task and relationship dimensions, you will want to foster better relationships in this situation.

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6. **A** is the most reasonable choice. Primarily you have a highly productive group, the members of which have good relationships. This answer doesn't mean complete abandonment, but the creation of a situation that promotes self-direction.

**B** is also a good choice. It is a mix of relationship behavior but is not too heavy on the relationship side.

Some people might feel it is a problem of leader self-perception, not a problem about the group. Therefore, you may wish to discuss it with the group (to share your own perceptions). However, it would not be appropriate to change the situation as **B** proposes.

**C** is not needed. The proverb: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it," may apply here.

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7. **B** is the best choice. These are experienced people, but they are slipping. Their suggestions and ideas should contain good information and merit consideration.

**B** is also worth noting. The major issue here is how directive or task-oriented you feel you must be. While the problem may be the relationship issue of cooperation, you must also maintain standards.

**C** is more directive but would be an important choice if the situation jeopardized client service.

**A** is not a good choice. If performance continues to decline, it will jeopardize service.

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8. **A** is the best choice It may be heavily task-oriented, but it appears warranted.

You could use **C** because it allows for a mixture of behavior but is still task-oriented.

**B** does not address your responsibility to see that employees meet performance standards.

**D** really goes against your responsibility to see that the unit meets standards.

## SUPERVISION SAMPLE QUESTIONS - GROUP B

1. The supervisor of a unit consisting of twelve employees has been in the position for one year. During this time none of the employees has **volunteered** any work-related or personal problems to the supervisor. The employees average over five years of service and seem to get along well together as a group. The supervisor's superior considers the general performance of the unit satisfactory. The **log** likely reason for the employees holding back information on work-related or personal problems in this situation is:

- A. The employees perceive the unit is doing well enough so there is no need to report problems and upset the status quo.
- B. The supervisor has not established a foundation of trust that would enable employees to volunteer such information.
- C. Problems are directed to an informal leader within the group who provides answers and decisions.
- D. Since the unit is relatively small and has experienced people, it is unlikely any problems have come up that need the supervisor's attention.
- E. The employees feel that by solving problems on their own, they will please the supervisor and have greater harmony in the unit.

2. A newly hired employee in a clerical unit has been reporting to work late on the average of twice a week Which of the following should be the supervisor's most appropriate initial action?

- A. Ask a senior employee with a good attendance record to discuss the matter with the individual.
- B. Privately discuss the matter with the individual to find out if there are any unusual circumstances causing the behavior.
- C. Send a memo to everyone in the unit, stressing that lateness cannot be tolerated.
- D. Bring the issue up at the next staff meeting, without sin<sup>s</sup>ling out any employee.
- E. Recommend that the employee be disciplined immediately so that the other employees ren<sup>s</sup>liv that the supervisor is aware of what is going on and is in control.

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3. The following statements are about time-management and delegation. Which is the most accurate?

- A. Delegating tasks usually takes more of the supervisor's time than doing it on their own.
- B. Time management is primarily a technique to get people to work harder.
- C. Good time management eliminates visiting and socializing on the job.
- D. Effective delegation enables subordinates to have complete freedom to do their jobs.

- E. A risk of delegation is that some duties may not be done as well as the supervisor would do them
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4. Supervisors are responsible for the orientation and training of employees in their units. On-the-job training is as an important and practical way to improve worker performance. Supervisors should follow the principles of effective training. Only one of the following principles about on-the-job training is false. Which one is false?
- A. Trainees who reach an acceptable level of performance rarely decline from that level.
- B. Adjust the rate or pace of training to what each individual or trainee can handle.
- C. New employees should be watched most closely during original training and immediately after.
- D. A good worker might not be a good person to assign as a trainer of new employees.
- E. An overqualified trainee can cause as many problems for a supervisor as one who is underqualified.
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5. John, a supervisor, has scheduled a counseling interview concerning the performance of Ed, one of his less productive employees. John knows this interview may be more difficult than usual. The discussion will be about a subject that is controversial, and important to Ed's future. Under these circumstances;
- A. It is unlikely that John and Ed will allow themselves to become personally involved.
- B. It is quite likely that information discussed between John and Ed will become distorted.
- C. It is likely that improved personal relationships will develop between John and Ed.
- D. John can expect Ed will try to be more understanding since the interview is so important to him.
- E. John needs to soften his approach to make sure he does not upset Ed.
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6. Motivating employees is an important and challenging aspect of a supervisor's job. Which of the following statements about employee motivation is most accurate?

- A The best performance levels will always be reached by a highly motivated employee.  
Employees with average motivation but high ability will outperform employees with high motivation but low ability on many jobs.
  - C. Supervisory techniques for raising the ability level of employees should take precedence over techniques for increasing employee motivation.
  - D. An authoritarian or "Pm-the-boss" supervisory style is particularly effective in motivating younger workers.
  - E. Competition between employees or between groups of employees is a form of motivation that should be strenuously avoided by supervisors.
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- 7. Maria supervises a clerk who works quickly but carelessly, particularly on routine tasks. This clerk wishes to transfer to another unit. The head of that unit asks Maria for her opinion of the clerk's work. Maria's best response is:
    - A. Say that the clerk works quickly, but is careless, particularly on routine tasks.
    - B. Want the unit head that a big mistake would be made by hiring the clerk.
    - C. Offer no criticism of the clerk's work. Allow the clerk to begin with a clean record.
    - D. Emphasize the clerk's good qualities and down play the negative ones.
    - E. Refuse to allow the transfer until the clerk's accuracy improves.
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- 8. Lamar, a supervisor, is informed that the employee turnover rate in his office is well above average and must be reduced. Which of the following would be least appropriate in attempting to reduce employee turnover?
    - A Look for possible clues to the underlying causes of the turnover in the records of employees who have left during the past year.
    - B. Review orientation and training procedures to see if they can be improved.
    - C. Have Jamar agree to be more lenient about performance standards and about employee requests for time off, so that his unit will gain a reputation as a good place to work.
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- D. Have Lamar discuss the turnover with a few of his employees whose judgment he can trust to see if they can provide some clues as to the causes of the problem.
  - E. Plan on talking to employees who say they will be leaving to see if they can provide some clues to the causes of the problem: (exit interviews)
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9. Some supervisors believe that the best way to schedule work is to assign a varied set of tacks to a group of employees and then let the group decide for itself how to complete the work. Which of the following is the chief advantage of this approach?
- A. It reduces the number of skills the employee is required to learn.
  - B. It reduces the opportunities for employees to work independently.
  - C. It reduces the amount of control that employees have over their work.
  - D. It increases the employees' job satisfaction.
  - E. It encourages employees to specialize in the work they are scheduled to do.
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10. Jack asked Enrique, a newly appointed supervisor and his peer, to meet with him on cooperation between their two units. Afterward, Jack felt uneasy that the meeting had not achieved its purpose. Jack wondered if a communication breakdown had occurred between himself and Enrique. Jack will know if the meeting was successful if
- A. Jack discovers that Enrique relates well to him in the future.
  - B. Jack learns more about Enrique's understanding of intergroup cooperation.
  - C. Jack finds out how other people perceive Enrique's communication skills.
  - D. Jack thinks that the meeting was important to Enrique.
  - E. Jack sees or hears of specific actions Enrique has taken since the meeting.
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11. Anne, a supervisor, spent many hours planning a new physical layout for the office. She was

certain that the changes would make working conditions more pleasant and reduce "bottle neck" problems in the flow of work. Anne worked closely on the layout with her superior. She also got some ideas from other supervisors. After she made the layout changes, Anne received many complaints from her employees stating they liked the old arrangements better. Anne was certain the new plan was much better than the old and she could not understand their reasons for resistance to change. In analyzing the cause of resistance to change, only one of the following statements is false. Which one is false?

- A. People resist changes that they do not understand, unless they have a chance to discuss it in advance.
- B. Communications to workers should be increased during times of change.
- C. People are most comfortable with the status quo and they just naturally resist change, no matter what it is.
- D. If employees understand and accept a change, there is little reason not to make the change rapidly.
- E. Resistance to change can be reduced if the change is introduced and done slowly and carefully.

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12. Lateshia has been supervising eleven state employees for three months. She has been balling trouble meeting certain departmental deadlines and suspects the scheduling problem may be a result of some people not doing their share of the work. In particular, Lateshia suspects one employee, Fred, who has worked in the unit longer than anyone else and has perfected "the art of looking busy." Lateshia wishes to find out how much work Fred really accomplishes. Of the following, it would be least appropriate for Lateshia to:
- A. Try to observe Fred more carefully while he is working.
  - B. Be more careful when scheduling Fred's work assignments.
  - C. Have a frank discussion with Fred about his performance problem.
  - D. Set specific time limits on when she would like to get work back from Fred.
  - E. During conversations with other employees, listen carefully for verification of her suspicions about Fred.

## ANSWERS FOR GROUP B QUESTIONS

1. Answer D is the best response in that it is the least likely reason for people not volunteering information to the supervisor. Even in a small unit with experienced people, it is highly unlikely that no work-related or personal problems will come up that involve the supervisor in some way in a span as long as one year.

Answer A is the second best choice as least likely, since a satisfactory rating may not be perceived by everyone as doing "well enough" This would be true of those who have career aspirations and desire recognition for excellence. It is, however, not as good a choice as D.

Answer C (informal leader) and (lack of trust) are very possible explanations, not least likely.

Answer E could happen in work situations where the members are independent and enjoy autonomy. It is, therefore, more likely to occur than either answer D or A.

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2. Answer B is the best response in this situation. The recently hired employee has no "track record" for the supervisor to use to find out the reason(s) for reporting late. Therefore, it is a good idea for the supervisor to listen, express concern, and be supportive.

Answers C and D are less desirable in that they do not deal directly with the problem employee. A memo or a staff meeting might be resented by the employees who are punctual. Also, these actions are indirect and might be ignored by the person they are intended to reach.

Answer E is not a good choice since the supervisor has not yet determined the reason for lateness. Recommending discipline is therefore premature, and especially risky if it is to be used as the basis for letting other employees know that the supervisor is in control.

Answer A is generally a weaker response than B in that the supervisor has delegated an assignment that can be best handled directly. If the senior employee has some rapport with the new employee or there is precedent for this type of action, it could be an acceptable alternative to answer B.

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3. Answer **E** is the best response since delegating tasks always contains the risk of the person not being able or willing to do them as well as the supervisor. Often, the trade-off is to accept performance at a reduced level in order to be free to do other work. This might be needed if there are tight time constraints. Supervisors may use this risk as a reason for not delegating, but the consequences of doing everything oneself can be even more costly. (backlogs and stress)

Answer **A** may be somewhat true at first, but in the long run delegation saves time.

Answers **B** and **C** are poor responses since time management can to improve work scheduling and help meet deadlines. A reasonable amount of socializing on the job is inevitable and helpful to employee moral.

Answer **D** is a possibility if you assume that the work has been performed well for a sufficiently long period of time, and if the superior feels confident in giving the subordinates complete freedom. But, since the supervisor is always responsible for all work delegated, subordinates do not typically have complete freedom.

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4. Answer **A** is the false answer. There are many reasons why trainees who reach an acceptable level of performance decline from that level. It may be that the trainee becomes overconfident or bored. The trainer may have relaxed follow-up too soon, allowing bad work habits to develop. Other possible reasons include illness; stress; external factors such as faulty materials, equipment breakdown; bottlenecks in new procedures or layouts; inadequate rewards to keep producing, and so forth.

Answers **B** and **C** are not only true but are good principles for supervisors to follow in training new employees.

Answer **D** is true in that being a good worker has no direct relationship to possessing training skills. Quite often, good workers are impatient or have not learned how to properly train others. It is, of course, possible that both good job skills and good training skills are possessed by the same individual and the supervisor would be well advised to utilize these talents.

Answer **E** is a less acceptable answer than answer **A**, in that it is true in many cases. Over-qualified trainees can create problems by having unrealistic standards, being impatient with their rate of learning, feeling they are "better" than the job allows them to demonstrate, and so forth. These problems, while different from those created by an underqualified trainee, are nevertheless disruptive for a supervisor.

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5. Answer **B** is the best choice. The interview involves a less productive employee who is likely to be sensitive, under stress and even defensive about his job security and his future. Under these circumstances **B** is the best answer since it is common to distort facts when defending oneself with a superior. The supervisor must be aware of this tendency for facts to become distorted when people are under stress.

Answer **A** is false. Chances are John **and** Ed will be more likely to become involved because the stakes are high.

Answer **E** is misleading. John needs to be straightforward with Ed or he risks another year of substandard performance. John should try to handle Ed as tactfully as he can, and even if the facts upset Ed, John should not soften his approach. He needs to be honest and talk about what is necessary to improve Ed's performance.

Answer **C** is not a good answer. An improved personal relationship is not a goal of the counseling interview. While an improved relationship is possible, it is more likely that the relationship will be either unchanged or temporarily strained.

Answer **D** is a possibility in that persons often try to be understanding if their personal stakes are high, especially if they don't have another job option. The choice of **D** is not as good as **B** however, since understanding is more likely in low stress situations, quite unlike the situation faced by Ed.

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6. Answer **B** is best because it shows the relationship between ability and motivation.

Answer **A** is a weaker response because it ignores the importance of ability. Skills, knowledge, experience and training are high indicators of performance. Motivation alone is not enough. Answer **C** similarly is one-sided. It favors training.

The approach described in **D** is unlikely to motivate. Structure and firm expectations may be needed, but few workers respond well to an authoritarian "I'm-the-boss" style. Workers often react negatively to this approach at any age.

**E** is not the best answer because competition can be a motivator. Competition, however, is risky. Supervisors should use it carefully. Given the interrelationship of people's work, competition can create more problems than benefits. Winner vs. loser strategies, in-fighting, and sacrifice of long-term gains for short-term "points" are all negative consequences.

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7. Answer **A** is the best response in that it is honest and does not necessarily destroy the clerk's opportunity to transfer. Most important, this response protects the supervisor's integrity and helps the other unit reach a sound decision. This question assumes the relationship between the supervisors of the two units is essentially open and honest.

Answers **B** and **C** are not good choices. Warning the unit head about making a big mistake (answer **B**) is pre judging the situation. This is not necessary since the clerk does produce work. Answer **C**, the other extreme, conceals information that is important for the other supervisor to know.

Answer **D** is generally a good idea in handling people, providing the "down play" is not evasive or withholding information. It is not as good a response as answer **A** in this instance because "down play" suggests something less than a candid appraisal of the carelessness issue.

Answer **E** is a possible answer if Maria advises the clerk that the transfer will go through more smoothly when her accuracy improves. The clerk may agree to wait until she makes this improvement. By following Answer **E**, Maria is supportive of the clerk and protective of the other supervisor. If Maria must fill the transfer opening immediately, or if the clerk is impatient to move, then answer **A** is better.

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8. The least appropriate answer to the turnover problem is answer **C**, Being lenient will not gain Lamar's unit a reputation as a good place to work. It is more likely that workers will take advantage of the leniency. The consequences could be declining productivity and complaints about fairness. That could jeopardize Lamar's performance rating. Most workers prefer a supervisor who is firm but fair, not one who makes concessions so that people will stay in the department.

Answers, **A**, **B**, **D** and **E** can be useful techniques to learn more about turnover.

Option **E**: Exit interviews can help reduce turnover by revealing the causes of problems. The supervisor can then use this information to solve problems.

**B** is a good choice. Turnover often occurs in the first few months. New employees may not feel welcome or they may not be clear about their job responsibilities.

Option **D** (talk to other employees) assumes the supervisor hasn't talked to them about work-related matters all along. Asking employees their opinions holds the possibility of yielding useful insights at little or no "cost" to the supervisor.

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9. Answer **D** is the chief advantage of this approach. Increased participation and flexibility in the performance of tasks can increase job satisfaction and is a strong motivation for many people.

Answer **A, B, and C** are all incorrect. Greater participation increases (not reduces) the number of skills used by employees (A); it increases (not reduces) the chances to work independently (B); and it increases (not reduces) the amount of control employees have over their work (C).

Answer **E** is possible under some circumstances in that employee participation may lead to more intensive involvement (specialization) in a job. However, this response is not as good as **D** because participation often leads not to specialization but to a broader or more generalized approach to the job. Furthermore, specialization is a disadvantage if it reduces flexibility in staffing.

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10. Answer **E** is the best response. The basic test of the success of a communication is if the receiver carries out the intent of the message. The sender can only know this through direct feedback from the receiver (observable behavior).

Answer **A** might be something you could use as a clue to the success of the communication. However, it is an uncertain measure of success because so many other factors could influence their future relationship.

Answer **B, C and D** do not directly apply to this communication breakdown. **B, C, and D** are all important to a person's effectiveness as a communicator, but, to know Enrique's knowledge level (answer D) or Enrique's communication skills as perceived by other supervisors (answer C); or the importance of the meeting to Enrique (answer D) would not provide Jack with what he needs to know about a specific communication breakdown.

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11. Answer **C** is false. It says that people resist any change. While there is a natural resistance to change, the other four responses provide insight on how to reduce this resistance. Some change is welcome, not resisted, particularly when people perceive benefit from the change. Answer **C** is too strong a statement and therefore false.

Answer **A** can be a very important tactic for reducing resistance, particularly on issues that affect employee job security, status, or friendships within the work group. Whenever possible, supervisors should let workers participate in decisions that affect them.

Answer **E** is also a good strategy. The rumor mill might supply the wrong information and increase resistance.

Answers **D** and **E** are both essentially sound. The changes can be rapid (answer **D**) if the people understand the reasons behind them. Only a negative impact on the workers would cause resistance. If resistance is high, a slower pace of change with careful explanations is usually best (answer **E**), unless the costs of delaying the change do not allow it. Answer **E** is acceptable as a poor or false response, however, if the change is poorly thought out or if there is no participation from the people affected. In that case, a slow and careful pace might increase resistance rather than reducing it.

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12. Answer **C** is the least appropriate response in this situation since the example states that Lateshia suspects Fred is "looking busy," but isn't sure. Having a frank discussion about his performance without really knowing the facts is likely to make the employee defensive and worsen the relationships between them.

Answer **A** (observing the employee more carefully while at work) gives Lateshia an opportunity to confirm or discard her suspicions. It will take a bit more time but will give her the facts she needs before taking any action.

Answer **B** (scheduling his work more carefully) and answer **D** (setting time limits) have the same advantages as answer **A** and although they also require a bit more time, each is a better and safer option for Lateshia than answer **C**.

Answer **E** is risky. It might be viewed as an attempt by Lateshia to use employees to "spy" on each other.