

WHAT EVERY SUPERVISOR SHOULD KNOW

S I X T H E D I T I O N



LESTER R. BITTEL/JOHN W. NEWSTROM

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Preface

When the first edition of this book appeared, its aim was simply to tell the truth about supervision. Evidence shows that this goal has been reached. This book has been read and consulted by over a half million supervisors and potential supervisors. It has been translated into Dutch, Danish, Portuguese, and Spanish and has been published in an Australian edition and in paperback by the Tata Press in Bombay, India. It is the basic text for supervisory management courses in over 100 two-year colleges. It has been adopted for in-house supervisory training programs by hundreds of industrial companies, commercial firms, and nonprofit institutions. And it has stood the most demanding test of all—the test of practicality and usefulness on the job. Thousands of practicing supervisors have bought, read, and consulted this handbook, which tries to tell them everything they ought to know about their jobs. So, in this sixth edition, let us once again examine the basic premises of *What Every Supervisor Should Know*.

SEVEN COMPELLING OBJECTIVES

The overall approach of this book is guided by seven interlocking objectives:

1. To offer readers practical advice about how to handle real-life, on-the-job situations.
2. To recognize an ever-changing social and work environment.
3. To provide useful insights based upon the job-tested experience of its authors and their associates.
4. To cover all the vital aspects of supervision.
5. To reflect the latest professional concepts of supervisory practice and organizational behavior.
6. To employ the most effective techniques for helping readers enjoy and assimilate the material presented in the text.
7. To maintain a good-humored perspective on what continues to be one of the world's most demanding jobs.

With these objectives as a foundation, *What Every Supervisor Should Know* provides a useful aid to a wide and diverse readership, which includes:

- **Instructors**, who use it as a basic text in preparing their students for the complex world of supervisory management.
- **Students** of first-level management in commerce, industry, and government, who turn to it as a central source of information about the practice of supervision.
- **Supervisors**, who find it to be a complete reference guide of methods for handling people, managing their jobs, and planning their own advancement.
- **Their bosses**, who may gain from it an insight into the problems—human, technical, and personal—supervisors must face daily.
- **Training directors** and other human resources development professionals, who use this text for guiding the training of supervisors in the interpersonal and administrative skills of their jobs.

A COMPREHENSIVE UPDATE

This latest edition of *What Every Supervisor Should Know* reflects an extensive reexamination of every aspect of coverage. It provides readers with the very latest information and the most current points of view from authoritative sources. Throughout, there has been a rigorous updating—of data, language, legal interpretation, situations, and examples.

New or greatly revised materials range from such topical subjects as computer surveillance of employee performance and suggestions for how to counsel an employee who suffers from AIDS, to the everyday problems of employee rights, documentation of disciplinary issues, job competency guidelines for employee training, and ways for improving the quality of employee performance.

The sixth edition contains two new chapters: Chapter 2, which shows supervisors how to cope with their changing environment, and Chapter 17, which provides readers with dozens of ideas for becoming innovative in improving the productivity of a work force.

An entirely new *Personal Development Portfolio* has also been added to this edition. Its four files provide practical guidelines for (1) planning a career, (2) managing job-related time, (3) coping with stress, and (4) moving up in an organization.

Of special assistance to potential and practicing supervisors are the three checklists that appear in the appendixes in Part 9:

- Appendix A, “Checklist for Planning the Day’s Work”
- Appendix B, “Supervisory Responsibility Survey”
- Appendix C, “Checklist for Accepting the Assignment of a New Department”

This edition also features extensive coverage of

- Service industries and occupations.
- Government and nonprofit situations.
- Small businesses and entrepreneurial examples.
- Information management and utilization.
- Computer usage and office automation applications.

UNIQUE LEARNING COMPONENTS

This edition retains the two unique learning methods that differentiate *What Every Supervisor Should Know* from most other texts in its field:

1. **A question-and-answer approach with immediate feedback.** This approach helps to reinforce understanding and to develop application proficiency in a manner similar to that of programmed learning. Additionally, the format enables readers to relate concepts to the problems they face daily at work. It also makes the text a convenient desk or workbench reference.
2. **Practical advice in the form of dos and don'ts.** Although the text is unswervingly based upon accepted theory, the authors do not back away from offering straightforward advice about how to handle difficult situations. Especially in the sticky matters of interpersonal relationships, our intention is to provide supervisors with a starting point for their actions and responses, rather than to leave them with what otherwise might be interpreted as a set of equivocating observations.

Building upon this foundation, a number of other learning aids are now incorporated in this edition. Collectively, they add greatly to the ease of reading and to the effectiveness of instruction. These new, or enhanced, aids include the following:

- **A chapter-opening pictorial**, which illustrates and highlights the five or six major sections in the chapter. These illustrations are numbered so that they relate to the learning objectives and each of the concepts in the chapter.
- **A set of learning objectives**, which alerts readers to what they should know or be able to do as a result of reading the chapter. These objectives are numbered, too, to relate them to the pictorial and the concepts discussed in the chapter.
- **A concept statement**, which previews each numbered section within the chapter.

A set of Review and Application learning aids appear at the end of the text material in each chapter. The Review aids include:

- **Key Concepts to Remember**, which enlarges upon and summarizes each of the numbered concepts presented in the chapter.
- **Supervisory Word Power**, which defines each key word introduced in the chapter.
- **Reading Comprehension**, which consists of 10 questions that probe the reader's understanding of the text material.

The Application aids include:

- **Self-Appraisal**, with a self-scoring guide, which challenges readers to judge how well they have grasped material presented in the chapter.
- **Cases Studies**, three or more for each chapter, each calling for analysis and solution. These cases are numbered sequentially, beginning with Case 1 in Chapter 1 and concluding with Case 72 in the Personal Development

Portfolio. Of special note are the cases that appear first in each chapter. These are uniquely structured in the *case-in-point* format—that is, each case presents the reader with five alternate solutions, often called “forced-choice” solutions. The reader is asked to rank the appropriateness of each alternative from first to fifth and to be prepared to defend these choices.

OPTIONAL ANCILLARIES

This textbook is supplemented by a *Study Guide* and an *Instructor’s Manual*. The *Instructor’s Manual* (available only to qualified instructors) contains a number of useful instructional aids, transparency masters, and additional case studies for class or seminar use. A computerized test bank is also available to adopters of the program.

Acknowledgments

The authors accept full responsibility for the validity of everything that appears in this text. We are, of course, deeply indebted to hundreds of associates and thousands of practicing supervisors whose thoughts and deeds have contributed directly and indirectly to this work. We could not have built this program without them, and we regret that we cannot name them all. Two individuals, however, deserve special recognition. One is Dr. George Sutcliffe of Central Piedmont Community College, Virginia, who reviewed every word of the manuscript and whose wise counsel is reflected everywhere within. The second person is Gregory R. Fox, Vice Chancellor for Finance and Operations at the University of Minnesota at Duluth, who prepared the *Study Guide*, the *Instructor’s Manual*, and the test bank for this edition. Greg’s experience as the director of the Duluth Center for Continuing Education adds considerably to the practicality and authority of the ancillary programs.

Lester R. Bittel
John W. Newstrom

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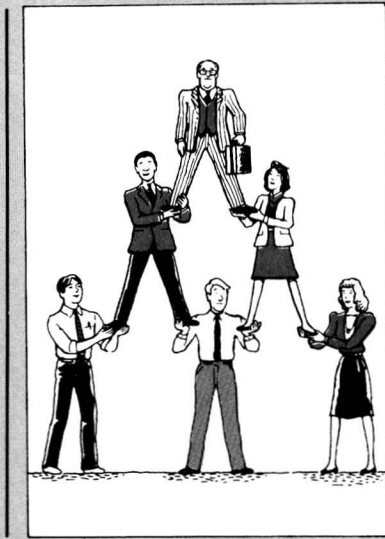
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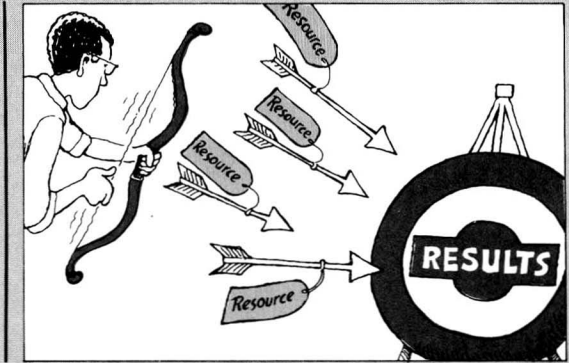
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Supervisory Management





1 Supervisors are an essential part of the management team.



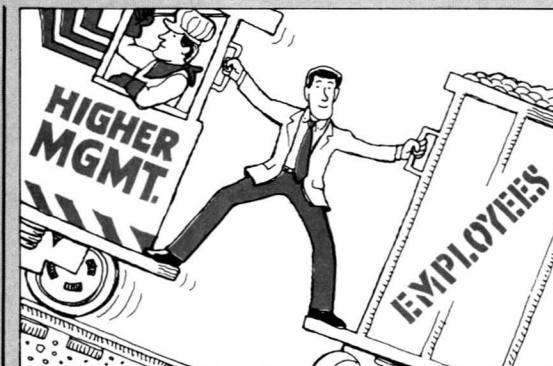
4 Their performance is gauged by results gained from resources.



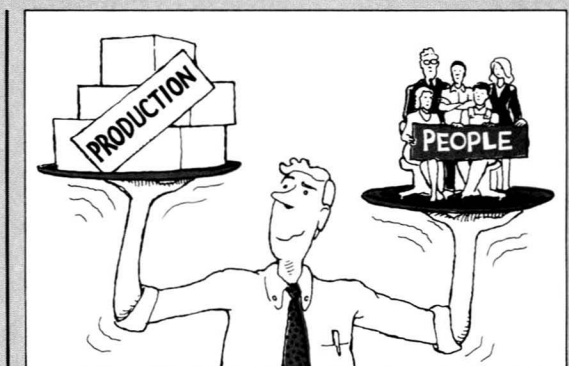
2 They need a broad range of technical and human competencies.



5 They must develop technical, administrative, and human skills.



3 They provide the linkage between management and employees.



6 Their concerns are balanced between production and people.

The Supervisor's Role in Management

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

After studying this chapter, you should be able to

1. Identify the level of the supervisor's position on a management team.
2. Describe the major competencies that supervisors are expected to bring to their work.
3. Explain the linkage that supervisors provide between management goals and employee performance.
4. Discuss the resources that supervisors must manage and the results that are obtained from them.
5. Describe the different emphases placed upon technical, administrative, and human relations skills at various levels of management.
6. Discuss the need for balancing a concern for output and a concern for the people who perform the work.

MEMBERS OF A UNIQUE TEAM

CONCEPT Supervisors are an essential part of the management team that gives an organization purpose and leadership.

What is management? Why is it so important?

Management is a unique occupation. **Management** is described as the process of obtaining, deploying, and utilizing a variety of essential resources in support of an organization's objectives. One of the most important resources of an organization is its employees. Managers devote a large portion of their own efforts to planning, organizing, staffing, activating, and controlling the work of these human resources. One clear distinction between managers and other employees, however, is that managers direct the work of others, rather than performing that work themselves.

Are all managers alike?

No. Managers, and the work they do, differ mainly according to their level in the organization's hierarchy. This difference is illustrated in Figure 1-1. At the top of an organization are its executives. **Executives** are in charge of, and responsible for, a group of other managers. Executives establish broad plans, objectives, and general policies. They motivate, direct, and control the managers who report to them.

Middle managers plan, initiate, and implement programs that are intended to carry out the broader objectives set by executives. Middle managers motivate, direct, and control the supervisors (and any other managers and employees) who report to them.

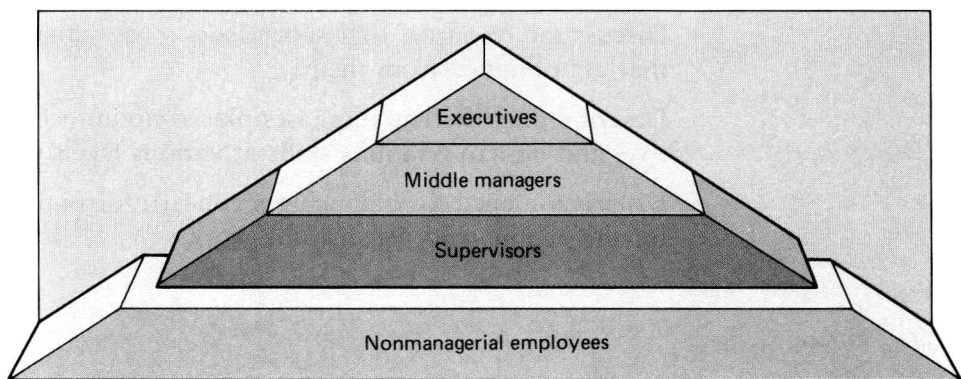


Figure 1-1 Managerial levels.

Supervisors are managers who normally report to middle managers. Supervisors have the responsibility of getting the “hands-on-the-work” employees to carry out the plans and the policies set by executives and middle managers. Supervisors plan, motivate, direct, and control the work of nonmanagerial employees at the operational level of the organization.

What kinds of persons become supervisors?

Just about every kind you can think of. An *average* supervisor, according to statistics describing some 8000 of them, has these characteristics:

- Is between 31 and 50 years of age.

- Has been with the current employer for 5 to 15 years.

- Has been a supervisor less than 5 years.

- Was promoted from the ranks.

- Is a high school graduate, and has probably attended college; one out of three is a college graduate.

Three out of four supervisors are male; about 10 percent are nonwhite. Half of all supervisors are employed in a white-collar environment. One out of three supervisors once belonged to a trade union. About six out of every ten supervisors have only nonmanagerial employees reporting to them. These are called “first-level supervisors.” About four out of ten are “second-level supervisors” and are at the fringes of middle management. They supervise other supervisors as well as nonmanagerial employees.¹

Why does frontline supervision get so much attention?

Because it represents just about the most important single force in the American economy. Supervisors, as an occupational classification, form a major segment of the overall labor force. In the United States alone, there is a supervisory management force 2 million strong. It holds the power to turn on—or turn off—the productivity of most organizations. These supervisors are the men and women who maintain the crucial interface between the management hierarchy and the vast body of employees who put their hands on, or apply their minds to, the real work of enterprise.

Recognition—and acceptance—of supervisors by top management has helped them to emerge finally as essential and integrated members of the management group and to assume all the responsibilities of full-fledged managers. The way hasn’t been easy. Too often it has been painfully slow. Even today there are companies where the supervisor’s

status is shaky. But on the whole, no single group of men and women has achieved and deserved such stature and attention in so short a time after so long a wait as has supervisory management.

Where did the term *supervisor* come from?

In earlier days the supervisor was the person in charge of a group of towrope pullers or ditchdiggers. That person was literally the “fore man,” since he was up forward of the gang. His authority consisted mainly of chanting the “one, two, three, up” which set the pace for the rest of the workers. In Germany the supervisor is still called a *Vorarbeiter* (“fore worker”); in England the term *charge hand* is used. Both terms suggest the lead-person origin.

The term *supervisor* has its roots in Latin, where it means “looks over.” It was originally applied to the master of a group of artisans. One hundred years ago it was not uncommon for the master in a New England shop to have almost complete power over the work force. The master could bid on jobs, hire his own crew, work them as hard as he pleased, and make his living out of the difference between his bid price and the labor costs.

Today the supervisor’s job combines some of the talents of the “fore man” (or leader) and of the “master” (skilled administrative artisan).

Legally, what makes a supervisor a supervisor?

The federal laws of the United States provide two definitions of a supervisor.

1. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 says that a supervisor is
...any individual having authority, in the interest of the employer, to hire, transfer, suspend, lay off, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward, or discipline other employees, or responsibility to direct them or to adjust their grievances, or effectively to recommend such action, if in connection with the foregoing the exercise of such authority is not merely of a routine or clerical nature, but requires the use of independent judgment.

The act specifically prohibits supervisors from joining a union of production and clerical workers, although they may form a union composed exclusively of supervisors.
2. The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 (or Minimum Wage Law) set the tone for the above by defining a supervisor as
...an executive whose primary duty consists of the management of a customarily recognized department or subdivision;
who customarily and regularly directs the work of two or more employees;

who has the authority to hire or fire other employees or whose suggestions and recommendations as to the hiring or firing and as to the advancement and promotion or any other change in status will be given particular weight; who customarily and regularly exercises discretionary powers; and who does not devote more than 20 percent of his (or her) hours of work to activities which are not closely related to the (managerial) work described above.

The law also stipulates that supervisors be paid a salary (regardless of how many hours they work). This latter provision makes some supervisors unhappy, since it makes them exempt from the provision of the law that calls for overtime pay after a certain number of hours have been worked. Many employers, however, voluntarily compensate for supervisory overtime in one way or another.

The thrust of these two laws is to make supervisors, once and for all, a bona fide part of management.

Are supervisors permitted to do the same work as the people they supervise?

Within the 20 percent stipulation of the Fair Labor Standards Act, there is no law stopping it. Most companies with labor unions, however, often have a contract clause that prohibits the supervisor from performing any work that a union member would ordinarily do (except in clearly defined emergencies, in which the supervisor would do as she or he sees fit).

This is a point on which most managements agree with unions. Few companies want supervisors to do the work their other employees are hired to do. Supervisors are most valuable when they spend 100 percent of their time supervising. It makes little sense for a \$500-a-week supervisor, for instance, to do the work of a \$300-a-week operator.

MANY COMPETENCIES REQUIRED

CONCEPT Supervisors must bring to their managerial work a broad range of technical and human relations competencies.

How does a person become a supervisor?

Three out of four supervisors are promoted from the ranks of the organization in which they serve. Typically, they are long-service employees. They have greater experience, have held more different jobs in the organization, and have significantly more education than the employees they supervise. Usually, it is apparent that supervisors are chosen

from among the best and most experienced employees in the organization.²

Other than those supervisors who rise from the ranks, 7 percent are hired directly from a college or technical school. Six percent enter through company-sponsored management training programs, and 13 percent are hired into the position from another company or organization.³

What personal characteristics does higher management look for in selecting supervisors?

The job of supervision is so demanding that higher management tends to look for *super*people to fill the role. Most firms, however, do establish a set criteria against which supervisory candidates are judged. Among the most sought-after qualities in a supervisor are these:

- Energy and good health
- Ability to get along with people
- Job know-how and technical competence
- Self-control under pressure
- Dedication and dependability
- Ability to stay on course
- Teachability
- Problem-solving skills
- Leadership potential
- A positive attitude toward management⁴

How can a newly appointed supervisor make the job of crossing over to the managerial ranks a less turbulent one?

A person who is made a supervisor crosses over from one style of thought to another. As an employee, an individual's concerns are with self-satisfaction in terms of pay and the work itself. As a manager, this same person is expected to place the organization's goals above all other job-related concerns. This means that a supervisor worries first about meeting quotas, quality, and cost standards; second about the employees who do the work; and last about himself or herself.

To make the task more difficult, the newly appointed supervisor usually has already made the long climb to the top of the employee ranks. Now the person must cross over to a new field of achievement—management, as shown in Figure 1-2. It will take a while to get a toehold at the supervisory level. For many, however, it will be the beginning of another long climb—this time to the top of the management heap.⁵

The pressures from managers above and from employees below make some new supervisors very uncomfortable.