

Fundamental Supervisory Practices

Center for Public Leadership and Governance

UNC-School of Government

November 3, 2020

Topics covered in today's session:

- Examine the skills important for effective supervision and assess your current competence with each skill.
- Examine the skills needed to establish trust and credibility as a supervisor.
- Clarify skills and attitude needed to move from buddy to boss.
- Review and discuss responses to new supervisor case studies.
- Meet your learning partner and begin reflecting on your course learnings to date.

Case Scenarios

Case Study 1

You worked for the County for 4 years as Child Support Officer. Two months ago your supervisor retired and you were promoted to the Child Support Supervisor position. You were selected for the job over Alice, a long-term employee who trained you when you arrived on the job. You have noticed that Alice hasn't really talked much to you since your promotion (and you used to share personal information about your families) and yesterday she told you she did not want to be asked to help train the new employee who has taken your place.

Case Study 2

You were recently promoted to the position of Fleet Maintenance Supervisor. You were previously the Lead Mechanic who worked under a boss that was always micromanaging the work unit. When you got promoted you told others in the garage that you were going to trust them to get their work done, and that you would not be on top of them all the time like the previous supervisor (Ralph) was. A few minutes ago one of the mechanics (who is also one a friend outside of work who you like to go fishing with) sticks his head in your office door and says he plans to take leave time this afternoon because the "fish are biting and it's too nice outside to be at work." He also says "I am so glad you are in this job. Ralph probably wouldn't have let me off." You know that there is a fire truck and sanitation truck that are currently in the shop and need some significant work before they can be put back on the road. You are worried that losing a mechanic for an afternoon will delay the repair work and hurt the operations of the departments who use these vehicles.

Case Study 3

Last week you were promoted to the job of Accounting Supervisor in the Finance Department after working as an Accounting Specialist in the same department. Before you were promoted you used to go out to lunch a couple times a week with two other employees in the office who you would consider your closest work friends. You have invited the others to join you for lunch in the past, but they have not accepted the invitation. You are headed out the door to lunch with your usual work group and you overhear one of the other employees say, "I know who is going to get the best merit raises this year."

Case Study 4

You have a Master's degree in Planning and had worked with the City for 6 months as a Planner when your boss, the Planning Director, resigned. You applied for the position and were selected for the job. Your staff consists of a Planner, who has worked for the City for 7 years and is 10 years older than you. He did not apply for the job "because he knew you would get it" and has a tendency just to do enough to get by; a Planning Technician who is 20 years older than you and has worked for the City since graduating from community college and is very proficient in her work, and an Administrative Assistant/Receptionist (about your age) who has been working for the City for 3 years, and has a habit of leaving the front desk unattended. She's also engaged to your cousin. Tomorrow will be your first day in the Planning Director role. What will you do?

Six Disciplines of Credibility

Kouzes and Posner

1. **Discovering Yourself**

Essential ingredients for leadership: Credo, Competence and Confidence.

- Know what you are doing and why
- Develop guiding values and follow them in making decisions.
- Seek out training and always look for ways to improve.
- Admit strengths and weaknesses.

2. **Appreciating Constituents (and their diversity)**

Leadership is a dialogue, not a monologue

- Be accessible
- Listen everywhere and listen well
- Learn your employees' stories.
 - What do they value?
 - What do they need?
 - Put yourself in their shoes and show empathy.
 - Appreciate the contributions of others. (Provide praise and recognition.)

3. **Affirming Shared Values**

Honor diversity and find common ground

- Create a culture of collaboration.
- Build a strong sense of community within the team
- Create shared values and norms

4. **Developing Capacity**

Liberate the leader in others

- Develop your staff – educate, educate, educate
- Promote training and provide resources
- Allow others to make decisions (give people more discretion) and keep them informed.
- Reward initiative
- Treat everyone as a leader of their own work.

5. **Serving a Purpose**

Recognize leadership as a service

- Be a servant leader – “Others-focused”
- Audit how you spend your time. Does your time match your values?
- Take actions based on values.
- Be the first to what has been agreed to. Set the example

6. **Sustaining Hope**

Be a cheerleader – be there at tough times.

- Inspire others; stay positive and upbeat
- Take pro-active steps to behave in ways that promote health and wellness.
- Show compassion, and continue to follow guiding principles.
- Be flexible to change plans if this is needed and set new goals.

Rebuilding Credibility

“Rebuilding lost leadership credibility will require daily attention. Leaders will have to nurture their relationships with constituents. They will have to show people that they care, every day. They will have to take the time to act consciously and consistently. Their actions must speak louder than their words. Leadership after all, exists only in the eyes of constituents.”

(From *Credibility: How Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It*, Kouzes and Posner, 2003)

Fundamentals of Supervision **Day 1-2 Reflection Questions**

What insights do you have about the session today?

What insights do you have about your role as a supervisor?

What questions remain for you around your role as a supervisor?

What are you learning about yourself? What new levels of self-awareness are you coming to?

What concerns do you have about developing your own credibility?

How are you making the transition from peer to supervisor?

What did you learn about your own learning to learn topic?

What did you learn about learning agility that is relevant for you?

What insights do you have about your own mental models? Where have they helped? What have they hurt?

What are your Guiding Principles?

Guiding Principles are a set of values that guide your decisions and remind you how to act when managing others. In their book, *Credibility: Why Leaders Gain and Lose It, Why People Demand It*, Kouzes and Posner (2003) note that credibility is strengthened when the leader has a philosophy and acts in ways that are consistent with it. This also requires staying true to these values even in times of adversity.

Developing a set of guiding principles can help you be a more effective supervisor and serve as a framework for managing yourself. Your guiding principles can be written in any style that works for you. Two examples are provided below.

Example 1:

I will follow through and do what I say I will do.

I will make decisions that are in the greatest interest of all, and not just for one person.

I will say “yes” to staff suggestions whenever possible.

I will celebrate accomplishments of staff.

I will approach change with optimism.

I will seek to understand the needs of others.

I will accept responsibility for mistakes.

I will encourage others to make decisions.

Example 2

Lead by example

Be consistent in attitude and actions

Be transparent in decision-making

Help others grow and learn

Set expectations and hold others accountable

Seek feedback from others

Value diversity and foster inclusion

To develop your own guiding principles, consider using the following process.

Step 1: Think about what you would want your staff members to say about you if they were asked to describe you as a supervisor and write those thoughts below.

Step 2: Using the list above, and from considering other relevant self-knowledge, develop 4-8 Guiding Principles that reflect how you want to behave as a supervisor.

Step 3: Examine these principles on a regular basis and ensure your actions are consistent with your Guiding Principles