



Unit - 1

Responsibilities of a Supervisor

Learning Outcomes

By the end of this unit the learner will be able to:

- ✓ Adjust to the supervisor's role with confidence.
- ✓ Develop your skills in listening, asking questions, resolving conflict, and giving feedback to employees.

Unit 1

Responsibilities of a Supervisor

Making the Transition

How Will My Role Change?

Things That Will Change

Usually people are promoted to a supervisor's job within the company because they are good at doing something, usually a technical or front-line kind of role. After they become a supervisor, they have to learn how to be good at doing something else.

What are the biggest differences between being an employee and being a supervisor?

Employee	Supervisor

Several things may change, but two things will almost certainly be different:

- The work will be different. There will be more administrative work, more supervising, and more managing, with less involvement in the actual work of the group.

- The responsibilities will increase. As a supervisor, you will be responsible for the work of others rather than just your own output.

What are some of the new challenges you will have to deal with?

What to Say If You're Teased About Being the Boss

You can probably expect to take some good-natured ribbing about being a new boss, especially if you will now be supervising people that you know or who you have otherwise worked with as a co-worker.

The best way to deal with it is to be good natured and accept it with a smile. If you keep your composure, the teasing will likely soon stop. If you show the slightest sign of annoyance, they will see this as a sign that they should needle you even more.

If the negative remarks continue, you may want to respond by calmly asking them to explain what they mean. This puts the other person on the spot, and they are forced to be more specific, which can make them look bad.

Tips for Learning the Ropes Quickly

When you are trying to learn the ropes quickly, don't get frustrated if everything doesn't come together as quickly as you'd like. Sometimes it may seem like it will take forever to learn all you need to know. Depending on the nature of your team's role, you can anticipate it taking up to a year before you are comfortable with all aspects of your role. By then you will have been through an entire year of the business, including budgets, performance reviews, recruiting, and looking to the needs of your team.

However, there are some things you can do to help you get off to a faster start.

- Identify the priorities of your job and then concentrate on how to handle these tasks. Focus your energies on what matters most.

- Find yourself a seasoned mentor. An experienced supervisor who gets along well with their team can usually give you some good advice.
- Be a good listener and ask questions. The more you listen, the more you learn. If you are curious about something, ask about it. The best time to ask lots of questions (of employees, your boss, and your colleagues) is when you are a new supervisor.
- Read anything pertaining to your job that you can get your hands on (such as procedures, regulations, journals, trade magazines, and leadership material).
- Get out into the working area and observe as much as you can. This will give you practical knowledge and it will show your team that you are interested in what they are doing. If you worked with this team before you became a supervisor, make a conscious shift to observe their work from a leader's point of view.

Questions Supervisors Have

How do I make sure employees recognize my new role and respect my position as a supervisor?

I've never done anything like this before. What if I'm no good at it and make a lot of mistakes?

What does it mean to be a role model? What do I have to model?

Who was the best supervisor you ever worked for? What did he or she do to make you think that way?

Responsibilities of a Supervisor

What are my responsibilities to management?

What are my responsibilities to my workgroup?

What are my responsibilities to myself?

Key Behaviors and Attitudes

Building the Right Environment

We can talk about ourselves in terms of leadership and set up a plan, but as the saying goes, “The proof is in the pudding.”

When you make a series of decisions about what you intend to do, and you start doing them, your behavior is in line with and supporting your intention. If you say you will do something and then allow yourself to be distracted, or you lose the commitment to a particular goal, then your behavior is not supporting your stated intention.

In order to keep your behavior on track, we encourage you to leverage the teaching of Christopher Neck and Charles Manz in their excellent book *Mastering Self-Leadership: Empowering Yourself for Personal Excellence, 6th Edition*. They write about the power of positive and negative cues in our environment.

Negative cues are things that distract or stop you from doing the things you want to be doing. If you want to cut down on the amount of time you spend watching television, but you have a 52 inch screen and 130 channels, you have a negative cue set up. The temptation to turn the television on and then start scanning programs or flipping channels is very evident. On the other hand, having a smaller screen, fewer channels, or a stack of tempting books next to your favorite chair can help distract you from the television.

Positive cues are things that influence you to do things that meet your goals. That stack of books handy when you sit down to relax, an ergonomic chair to work from, or a good long distance plan when you need to be making a lot of calls, are all positive cues. If your work involves a lot of driving, then keeping your car clean and in good shape is another positive cue. Positive cues can also include calendars with good scheduling programming, reminders, sticky notes, task lists, and being with people who are reminders of your desired behaviors.

Motivation from Within

The things that motivate us are as different as the people we know. Do you know what motivates you?

- What motivated Walt Disney to create cartoons and capture them on film?
- What motivated Mohammed Ali to become a world champion boxer?
- What motivated Stephen King to be an internationally renowned writer?

The things that motivate us include the **rewards** we get from doing the things that we want to do. This doesn't mean that you should be self-serving without thought to other people's needs, or to the laws or social mores that govern the way we act. It does mean that there are things that we do where the act of doing is its own reward and that in itself is motivating.

Other times, there are more **tangible rewards**. A reward can be simple, like time to read a book or having lunch with a mentor. These kinds of rewards help to motivate us quite easily and naturally. Other times, **more sophisticated rewards** are needed to encourage us to complete tasks that we don't find naturally rewarding.

Test your knowledge

Consider the following questions in terms of your own motivation.

Are you able to incorporate enough activities that you enjoy in your work?

Is there a space at work where you can work comfortably and effectively?

Do you spend more time thinking about the parts of your job that you do like rather than the parts that you don't enjoy?

Do you point your thinking toward pleasantries of your job, rather than things that are unpleasant?

Committing to Lifelong Learning

As you may have already figured out, **lifelong learning** means that we recognize and appreciate that learning does not stop when we leave school. With the rapid advances that technology makes, our international relationships, and global economies, the ability to learn and continue to seek knowledge are essential aspects of life today. Lifelong learning is part of leadership; it is a commitment by leaders to seek knowledge continuously.

Employers demonstrate their own appreciation for lifelong learning when they write up a job posting that includes equivalencies, with statements like, “A university degree or equivalent is required.” This demonstrates that while qualifications are valued, so is the learning that comes away from school.

If you commit to lifelong learning, you will keep your finger on the pulse of things that are changing and developing in your environment and around the world. This doesn’t mean that you are restricted in what you learn, either. No matter what your field of work or study is, your value and your understanding of the world increases as you learn about all kinds of subjects. Geography, geology, anthropology, music, art, sports, history, languages, business, technology, agriculture, and cooking will all enrich what you know, whether you work in a broad area such as science, or a narrower one such as micro-brewed beer.

In his book *The Outliers*, **Malcolm Gladwell** describes how people become successful at what they do through the value of practice. He proposes the theory that it takes about 10,000 hours of practice to master something, whether it is a sport, music, or academic field. Human nature is for people to look at successful people and say, “Wow, she sure lucked out,” or, “He did that so easily.” These statements are short-sighted as we know that success and mastery do not normally come easily: they require attention, learning, and plenty of practice.

This concept does not mean that you can create absolutely anything for yourself. Although it might seem like a nice ideal, it just isn’t realistic. Most of us do not wield the power to change economies, influence politics, or stop weather disasters. We do, however, have the ability to choose our behavior and to lead ourselves.

Learning Plans

A learning plan is very specific, although it can be presented in many ways. Whatever form it takes, it should be meaningful to you, looked at regularly, and flexible enough to reflect your evolving life and goals.

Further Reading:

