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SUPERVISION TODAY!

Ninth Edition



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Supervision Today!

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PREFACE

New to This Edition

We have been pleased with the response to the previous edition of the textbook. Reviewers and current adopters tell us that the content is solid and that the skill-building exercises work well in the classroom. For the ninth edition, we have concentrated on refining the presentation and addressing the evolving roles that supervisors are asked to embrace in today's workplace. Significant additions to the ninth edition include the following:

Chapter 1

New section "Why Study Supervision?"

Chapter 2

Updates on Contingent Workforces

Chapter 3

Updates on Six Sigma Quality

Chapter 4

Updates on Teleworking

New Case Study "Push the Magic Button"

Chapter 5

New Case Study "Attracting the Perfect Candidate"

Chapter 6

Updates on Cost Reduction

Updated "Something to Think About – Out With E-mail"

Chapter 7

New "News Flash! – Daily Delivery Decisions at UPS"

New "Something to Think About – Making Good Decisions"

New section "Global Diversity in Decision Making"

New Case Study "Simply Orange Decisions"

Chapter 8

New "News Flash! – Making it Rain . . . at Gravity"

Updates on Employee Recognition Programs

New Case Study "Naturally Motivated"

Chapter 9

New "Something to Think About – Growing New Leaders"

New Case Study "Insane Leadership Legacy"

Chapter 10

New "Something to Think About – What is the Best Method to Communicate Bad News?"

Updates on Communication

Chapter 11

New Case Study “An Rx for Improved Teamwork in the Health-Care industry”

Chapter 12

New “Something to Think About – An Unfair Performance Review”

New “News Flash! – The Anytime Feedback Tool at Amazon”

New Case Study “Accentuate the Positive!”

Chapter 13

New Responding to a Supervisory Dilemma

Updates on OSHA Enforcement Actions

Updates on Workplace Violence

New Case Study “When Stress Kills”

Chapter 14

New Case Study “Dealing with Conflict at Nomura Holdings Inc.”

Chapter 15

New “News Flash! – This Changes Everything”

New section “What is Disruptive Innovation?”

New Case Study “Poor Performance Forces a Make Over at Avon”

Chapter 16

New “Something to Think About – A Bitter Taste at the Coffee House”

New Case Study “A Slap Shot at USA Hockey”

Postscript

New section “Once You Get a Job Be Proactive and Find Yourself a Mentor”

Solving Teaching and Learning Challenges

Welcome to the ninth edition of *Supervision Today!*. We continue to present this book in a way that our users have found useful. Many of you helped make the previous editions of this book a resounding success. In this edition, we continue that trend and make your reading experience even better.

In our quest to make this the most complete supervision text currently available, we’ve taken into account feedback from our readers. We continue to present a book that focuses on the basic elements of supervision—one that covers the essential and traditional concepts in effectively supervising employees; that has a strong applied, practical, and skill focus; and that is user friendly.

Most of us understand concepts better when we can relate them to our everyday lives. In this edition, we help you build an understanding of supervising through real-life concepts, examples, and practice. We believe that when you have an opportunity to apply what you are learning—in an educational setting that encourages risk taking—you will perform more effectively on the job. Moreover, in the process you will build your supervisory skills portfolio!

We recognize that the supervisor’s job continues its rate of dramatic change. Supervisors are working with a more diverse workforce in terms of race, gender, and ethnic background. Supervisors’ jobs are constantly affected by technological changes, a more competitive marketplace, and corporate restructuring and workflow redesign. Despite all of these changes, supervisors still need to understand the traditional elements of directing the work of others and the specific skills required: goal setting, budgeting, scheduling, delegating, interviewing, negotiating, handling grievances, counseling employees, and evaluating employees’ performance.

A good supervision text must address both traditional and contemporary issues. We believe we've done this by focusing on relevant issues and by including lots of examples and visual stimuli to make concepts come alive. The full-color design format captures visually the reality and the excitement of the supervisor's job. We've also spent years developing a writing style that has been called "lively, conversational, and interesting." That's just another way of saying that you should be able to understand what we're saying and feel as though we're actually in front of you giving a lecture. Of course, only you can judge this text's readability. We ask you to read a few pages at random. We think you'll find the writing style both informative and lively.

Developing Employability Skills

Today it's not enough simply to know about supervision; you need skills to succeed in your supervisory efforts and in a rapidly changing job market. You should be aware of your career options and how to go about developing a variety of skills. To focus on developing your supervisory abilities, we offer our skill component in the Enhancing Understanding and Developing Your Supervisory Skills sections at the end of each chapter, which include the following features:

- Summary
- Comprehension: Review and Discussion Questions
- Key Concept Crossword
- Getting to Know Yourself
- Building a Team
- A step-by-step description of how to develop your skills in the area discussed in that chapter
- Communicating Effectively
- Thinking Critically

These features are designed to help you build analytical, diagnostic, team-building, investigative, and writing skills. We address these skill areas in several ways. For example, we include experiential exercises to develop team-building skills; cases to build diagnostic, analytical, and decision-making skills; and suggested topical writing assignments to enhance writing skills.

Summary Just as Chapter Outcomes and Learning Objectives clarify where you are going, chapter summaries remind you where you've been. Each chapter of this book concludes with a concise summary organized around the opening chapter outcomes and learning objectives.

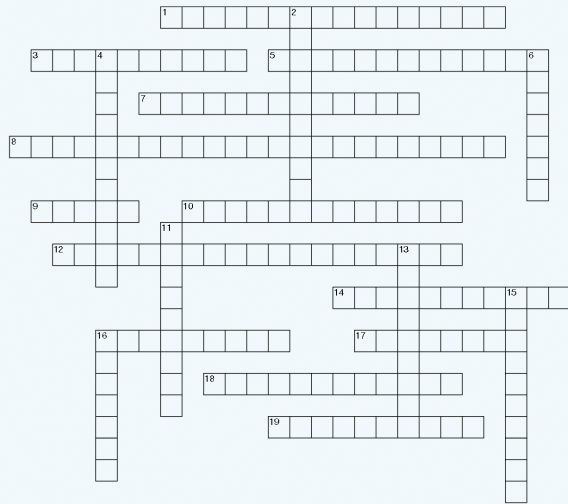
Comprehension: Review and Discussion Questions These questions reinforce chapter content. If you have read and understood the content of a chapter, you should be able to answer the review questions, which are drawn directly from the material in the chapter. The discussion questions, on the other hand, tend to go beyond comprehension of chapter content. They're designed to foster higher-order thinking skills. The discussion questions enable you to demonstrate that you not only know the facts in the chapter but can also use those facts to deal with more complex issues.

SUMMARY

After reading this chapter, you can:

1. **Explain the difference among supervisors, middle managers, and top management.** Whereas all are part of the managerial ranks, they differ by their level in the organization. Supervisors are first-level managers—they manage operative employees. Middle managers encompass all managers from those who manage supervisors up to those in the vice-presidential ranks. Top management is composed of the highest-level managers—those responsible for establishing the organization's overall objectives and developing the policies to achieve those objectives.
2. **Define supervisor.** A supervisor is a first-level manager who oversees the work of operative or non-management employees.
3. **Identify the four functions in the management process.** Planning, organizing, leading, and controlling make up the management process. Planning involves establishing the overall strategy and setting goals. Organizing involves arranging and grouping jobs, allocating resources, and assigning work so activities can be accomplished as planned. Leading involves motivating employees, directing the activities of others, communicating properly, and resolving conflict among organizational members. Controlling involves monitoring the organization's performance and comparing it with previously set goals.
4. **Explain why the supervisor's role is considered ambiguous.** A supervisor is (1) a key person (a critical communication link in the organization); (2) a person in the middle (interacting and reconciling opposing forces and competing expectations); (3) just another worker (decision-making authority is limited, and supervisors may perform operating tasks alongside the same people they supervise); and (4) a behavioral specialist (able to listen, motivate, and lead).
5. **Describe the four essential supervisory competencies.** The four essential supervisory competencies are technical, interpersonal, conceptual, and political competence. Technical competence reflects one's ability to apply specialized knowledge or expertise. Interpersonal competence is the ability to work with, understand, and communicate with others both individually and in groups. Conceptual competence is one's mental ability to analyze and diagnose complex situations. Political competence is the ability to enhance one's power by building a power base and establishing the right connections in the organization.
6. **Identify the elements that are necessary to be successful as a supervisor.** Several elements are necessary to become a successful supervisor, including understanding that you're part of the management team, handling legitimate power properly, and recognizing differences in employees.

KEY CONCEPT CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. people who manage other managers
3. competency in the ability to analyze and diagnose complex situations
5. competency in the ability to work with and communicate with others
7. people responsible for establishing an organization's overall goals
8. conceptual, interpersonal, technical, and political
9. the ability to demonstrate a behavior related to attaining a performance goal
10. doing the right task
12. planning, organizing, leading, and controlling
14. first-line managers
16. competency in the ability to enhance one's power
17. defining an organization's goals
18. the systematic grouping of people to accomplish a specific purpose
19. doing a task right

DOWN

2. the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently through and with people
4. monitoring activities
6. motivating employees
11. competency in the ability to apply specialized knowledge or expertise
13. an employee who physically produces goods and services
15. arranging and grouping jobs
16. the primary activities supervisors perform

Key Concept Crossword Crossword puzzles using the key concepts from each chapter provide another way to reinforce comprehension on a level and in a way that you may enjoy. Answers are provided in the Solutions section at the end of the book.

Getting to Know Yourself Before you can effectively supervise others, you must understand your current strengths as well as areas in need of development. To assist in this learning process, we encourage you to find and complete self-assessments.

Building a Team These exercises give you an opportunity to work as a team, learning and practicing the supervisory skills introduced in the chapter. By combining your new knowledge and natural talents, you will be able to practice a supervisory activity and assess your own progress.

Chapter Topic How-To Focus This section gives step-by-step instructions on how to develop a skill directly related to a topic addressed in the chapter.

Communicating Effectively In this feature, suggested writing projects help you

develop writing skills. Projects can also become presentations to reinforce verbal and presentation skills.

Thinking Critically: Case Analyses Each chapter concludes with two case studies designed to make you think critically as you make decisions regarding a supervisory issue. These cases enable you to apply your knowledge to solve problems faced by supervisors. For this edition, 11 of the cases have been replaced and updated with new topical situations dealing with current workplace issues.

Instructor Teaching Resources

Before you start a journey, it's valuable to know where you're headed so you can minimize detours. The same holds true in teaching with a text. To make learning more efficient, we continue to include the following features to enhance your interactions with students.

Chapter Outcomes and Learning Objectives Each chapter opens with a list of outcomes and learning objectives that describe what students will be able to do after reading the chapter. These outcomes and learning objectives are designed to focus student's attention on the major issues in each chapter. Each outcome and learning objective is a key learning element.

Key Concepts Each chapter contains a list of the key concepts addressed in the chapter. These terms represent critical comprehension areas. And through the Key Concept Crossword, students can get feedback on how well they've understood the key concepts.

Responding to a Supervisory Dilemma These interesting chapter-opening stories focus on an issue regarding a topic that will be discussed in the chapter. Although they have value, these vignettes are often overlooked. To address this problem, and to focus heavily on supervisory issues, all of our opening vignettes are posed as situational dilemmas. No matter where students may work as a supervisor, at some point in their career they will be faced with a difficult issue. Usually the issue is one that goes beyond simply following the law. These opening vignettes are designed to encourage students to think about what they may face and to begin to develop a plan of action for handling workplace dilemmas.

Margin Notes Key concepts identified at the beginning of each chapter are set in boldface when they first appear in the chapter. The marginal note defines the term for quick reference.

Responding to a Supervisory Dilemma

Organizations are changing, but are organizations changing their traditional structures? By and large, the answer is no, traditional organizational structures are still evident today. However, some organizations are changing the traditional organizational structure to appeal to potential employees. One such company is Google. According to *Fortune*, Google/Alphabet is the No. 1 place to work for the seventh time in 10 years.¹ What makes this organization so different from others? Why are employees flocking to organizations such as Google?



Eric Carr/Alamy

The traditional organizational pyramid has operative employees at the bottom of the triangle, supervisors above them, middle managers above supervisors, and top management above all (see Exhibit 1-1). This structure is a vertical approach to management in which the decision-making is done at the top and orders are sent down to the operational employees at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. Operative employees do not have much say in the organization's operations.

Google uses a cross-functional organizational structure combined with a unique philosophy. Their cross-functional organizational structure is more of a

team approach to management and is structured horizontally. According to Google.com, they purposely maintain "the open culture often associated with startups, in which everyone is a hands-on contributor and feels comfortable sharing ideas and opinions."² Google's benefits package also plays a major part in attracting employees. Google states that, from employee retirement funds to their free lunch and dinner program, they strive to offer customizable programs that suit the needs of each of their employees.

What more could an employee want? Which organizational structure do you think works best and why? Do you think the vertical structure works better in some cases, whereas the horizontal structure works better in others? Would you prefer a more relaxed working environment or do you prefer something more structured?

This book is about the millions of supervisors working in today's dynamic organizations and the jobs they do in helping their organizations reach their goals. This book will introduce you to the challenging activities and the rapidly changing world of supervision today!

¹Fortune, "100 Best Companies to Work for," 2016, <http://fortune.com/best-companies/> (accessed December 27, 2016).

NEWS FLASH!

THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE IN MODERN ORGANIZATIONS

For years, the role of the working or front-line supervisor has been considered by many organizations to be little more than a stepping-stone into management. Business and management schools devoted their attention primarily to teaching principles and theories applicable to upper management. Many professors figured their graduates would hold down beginning supervisory roles for a short period and then move into something more challenging. How things have changed!

Today's organizations are complex. Some of the complexity is a result, in part, of the following:

- Molding a productive team out of a mix of full-timers, part-timers, "temps," and contract workers.
- Implementation of quality and productivity programs such as ISO certification and Six Sigma, just-in-time and lean manufacturing, and organizing work using self-directed teams.
- Enforcing the ever-growing number of employment laws pertaining to hiring and dismissal, antidiscrimination, sexual harassment, disability accommodation, workplace violence, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, Occupational Safety and Health Administration

(continued)

News Flash! Because of the popularity of these vignettes in previous editions, we continue to include them in this new edition. Each vignette presents an issue that highlights a distinction between traditional and contemporary supervisory roles. Each chapter contains a news flash item specific to the topics included in the chapter.

Something to Think About Supervisors make many decisions every day. Some decisions present clear answers based on legal and company rules and regulations. Other resolutions may not be so obvious. Students need to evaluate and think through a number of variables to develop an answer or course of action. These sections are excellent class discussion starters, and are included in each chapter to focus on the presented topics.

Focus on Comprehension Second-level headings are presented in the form of questions. Each of these questions was carefully written to reinforce understanding of specific information. After reading a chapter (or a section), students should be able to return to these headings and answer the question. If students are unable to answer a question or are unsure of their response, instructors will know exactly what sections students need to reread or review, or where to place more of their effort. All in all, this format provides a self-check on student reading comprehension.

Something to Think About (and promote class discussion)

BECOMING A SUPERVISOR

Becoming a supervisor is a challenging opportunity. Some individuals look forward to "taking the helm" of a crew of workers, whereas others are put into this situation with little advance notice or training. As you consider going into a supervisory position—or making yourself a more effective supervisor than you are today—think about the following two areas:

1. List five reasons why you want to be a supervisor.
2. Identify five potential problems or difficulties that you may encounter when you become a supervisor.

Comprehension Check 1-2

- 5. *True or false?* The transition from middle manager to top-level manager creates about as much anxiety as going from worker to supervisor.
- 6. Which one of the following is an interpersonal competency?
 - a. Specialized knowledge
 - b. Motivating others
 - c. Analyzing skills
 - d. Enhancing one's power base
- 7. A _____ is the ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behavior that is functionally related to attaining a performance goal.
 - a. planning effort
 - b. political competency
 - c. skill
 - d. successful planner
- 8. Which one of the following items does not relate to stimulating individual and group performance?
 - a. Listening
 - b. Conducting group meetings
 - c. Interviewing
 - d. Projecting charisma

Comprehension Check This is a quick “Are-you-understanding-what-you’re-reading?” feature. In each chapter, there are two Comprehension Checks with objective questions. These questions are answered in the “Solutions” section at the end of the book and offer quick feedback on whether students have understood what they read. If students have problems answering these questions correctly, instructors can direct them to reread specific sections before moving on to new material in the book. Of course, not every element of the chapter’s material can be tested, and simply answering these questions correctly does not guarantee comprehension. But answering these questions correctly can indicate that students are making progress and that learning has taken place.

Thinking Critically Critical thinking is also an important outcome. Several years ago, training organizations began taking a hard look at themselves. Typically, they found that their programs needed to expand language-based skills, knowledge, and abilities across the curriculum. What outcomes did this achieve? In essence, it indicated the need for all training programs to cover the basic skill areas of communication, critical thinking, computer technology, globalization, diversity, and ethics and values. This edition of *Supervision Today!* continues this feature to help students acquire these key skills by upgrading levels of thinking from knowledge to comprehension and, finally, to application. We convey relevant supervisory knowledge, give students an opportunity to reinforce their comprehension, and demonstrate to the instructor how they can apply the concepts.

Instructor Resource Center By visiting www.pearsonhighered.com/irc, instructors can access a variety of print, digital, and presentation resources available with this text in downloadable format. Registration is simple and gives instructors immediate access to new titles and new editions. As a registered faculty member, you can download resource files and receive immediate access to, and instructions for, installing course management content on your campus server. In case you ever need assistance, Pearson’s dedicated technical support team is ready to help with the media supplements that accompany this text. Visit <http://support.pearson.com/getsupport> for answers to frequently asked questions and toll-free user support phone numbers.

The following supplements are available for download to adopting instructors:

Supplements available to instructors at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc	Features of the Supplement
Instructor’s Manual authored by Barbara S. Faries from Mission College, Santa Clara, CA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Chapter-by-chapter summaries• Examples and activities not in the main book• Discussion questions• Example figures• Additional exercises• Solutions to all questions and problems in the book

Supplements available to instructors at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc	Features of the Supplement
Test Bank authored by Barbara S. Faries from Mission College, Santa Clara, CA	800 multiple-choice, true/false, short- answer, and graphing questions with these annotations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct answer • Difficulty level (1 for straight recall, 2 for some analysis, 3 for complex analysis) • Type (Multiple-choice, true/false, short-answer, essay) • AACSB learning standard (Analytical Thinking; Reflective Thinking; Application of Knowledge) • Page reference
Computerized TestGen®	TestGen allows instructors to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Customize, save, and generate classroom tests • Edit, add, or delete questions from the Test Item Files • Analyze test results • Organize a database of tests and student results
PowerPoints Presentations authored by Jeffrey Anderson from Ohio University College of Business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slides include all the figures, tables, maps, and equations in the text-book. • PowerPoints meet accessibility standards for students with disabilities. Features include, but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Keyboard and Screen Reader access ◦ Alternative text for images ◦ High color contrast between background and foreground colors

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Acknowledgements

Writing a textbook is often the work of a number of people whose names generally never appear on the cover. Yet without their help and assistance, a project like this would never come to fruition. We'd like to recognize some special people who gave so unselfishly to making this book a reality.

We want to thank the users of previous editions and students who provided a number of suggestions for this revision. To all who provided us feedback, please know that we take your comments and suggestions seriously. We review each comment and see how it might be incorporated into the text. Unfortunately, in a few instances, although the comments and suggestions were absolutely on target, sometimes adding specific information isn't feasible. That's not to say that we discounted what you said, but we had to balance the focus of the book with the feedback given.

Finally, we'd like to add personal notes.

From Steve's corner: To my wife, Laura Ospanik. Laura continues to be a phenomenal source of ideas and support. For that I am grateful.

From Dave's corner: I want to give special thanks to my family, who give me the encouragement and support to do my job. Each of you is special to me in that you continue to bring love and warmth into my life. Terri, Mark, Meredith, Gabriella, and Natalie, thank you. You continue to make me proud to be part of your lives.

From Rob's corner: I want to thank my wife, Sheila, for encouraging and supporting me in my work on the ninth edition of *Supervision Today!*. I also thank my granddaughters Kennedy, Katherine, and Caroline for demonstrating the love of learning this book is meant to inspire. I continue to be grateful for the opportunity to be part of this learning endeavor.

Now that we've explained the ideas behind the text, we'd like to extend an open invitation. If you'd like to give us some feedback, we encourage you to contact us.

Send your correspondence to Dave DeCenzo at E. Craig Wall, Sr. College, Coastal Carolina University, P.O. Box 269154, Conway, SC 29528-6054. Dave is also available via e-mail at ddecenzo@coastal.edu. Alternatively, you may contact Rob Wolter at spv2day@iupui.edu. Either way, we welcome your feedback!

We hope you enjoy reading this book as much as we enjoyed preparing it for you.

Steve Robbins
Dave DeCenzo
Rob Wolter

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Defining Supervision and Supervisory Challenges

Part 1 introduces you to the world of work and the functions of a supervisor. Emphasis in this section is placed on supervisory roles and the skills needed to be successful in today's ever-changing work environment. Supervisory positions are also being influenced by a number of environmental factors. What these factors are, and how they affect the supervisory function, are discussed.

Chapter 1 ■ Supervision Fundamentals

Chapter 2 ■ Supervision Challenges

1

CHAPTER

Supervision Fundamentals

Key Concepts

After completing this chapter, you will be able to define these supervisory terms:

- conceptual competence
- controlling
- effectiveness
- efficiency
- employee engagement
- first-level managers
- interpersonal competence
- leading
- management
- management functions
- middle managers
- operative employees
- organization
- organizing
- planning
- political competence
- process
- skill
- supervisors
- supervisory competencies
- sustainability
- technical competence
- top management

Chapter Outcomes and Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, you will be able to:

- 1-1. Explain the difference among supervisors, middle managers, and top management.
- 1-2. Define *supervisor*.
- 1-3. Identify the four functions in the management process.
- 1-4. Explain why the supervisor's role is considered ambiguous.
- 1-5. Describe the four essential supervisory competencies.
- 1-6. Identify the elements that are necessary to be successful as a supervisor.
- 1-7. Identify the value of studying supervision.

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Responding to a Supervisory Dilemma

Organizations are changing, but are organizations changing their traditional structures? By and large, the answer is no, traditional organizational structures are still evident today. However, some organizations are changing the traditional organizational structure to appeal to potential employees. One such company is Google. According to *Fortune*, Google/Alphabet is the No. 1 place

to work for the seventh time in 10 years.¹ What makes this organization so different from others? Why are employees flocking to organizations such as Google?

The traditional organizational pyramid has operative employees at the bottom of the triangle, supervisors above them, middle managers above supervisors, and top management above all (see Exhibit 1-1). This structure is a vertical approach to management in which the decision-making is done at the top and orders are sent down to the operational employees at the bottom of the organizational hierarchy. Operative employees do not have much say in the organization's operations.

Google uses a cross-functional organizational structure combined with a unique philosophy. Their cross-functional organizational structure is more of a



Eric Carr/Alamy Stock Photo

team approach to management and is structured horizontally. According to Google.com, they purposively maintain “the open culture often associated with startups, in which everyone is a hands-on contributor and feels comfortable sharing ideas and opinions.”² Google’s benefits package also plays a major part in attracting employees. Google states that, from employee retirement funds to their free lunch and

dinner program, they strive to offer customizable programs that suit the needs of each of their employees. What more could an employee want?

Which organizational structure do you think works best and why? Do you think the vertical structure works better in some cases, whereas the horizontal structure works better in others? Would you prefer a more relaxed working environment or do you prefer something more structured?

This book is about the millions of supervisors working in today’s dynamic organizations and the jobs they do in helping their organizations reach their goals. This book will introduce you to the challenging activities and the rapidly changing world of supervision today!

¹Fortune, “100 Best Companies to Work for,” 2016, <http://fortune.com/best-companies/> (accessed December 27, 2016).

OBJECTIVE 1.1

Explain the difference among supervisors, middle managers, and top management.

organization

A systematic grouping of people brought together to accomplish some specific purpose.

Organizations and Their Levels

Supervisors work in places called **organizations**. Before we identify who supervisors are and what they do, it’s important to clarify what we mean by the term *organization*. An organization is a systematic grouping of people brought together to accomplish some specific purpose. Your college or university is an organization. So are supermarkets, charitable agencies, churches, neighborhood gas stations, the Indianapolis Colts football team, Nokia Corporation, the Australian Dental Association, and Cedars-Sinai Hospital. These are all organizations, because each comprises specific common characteristics.

²Google, “Our Culture,” Google.com, <https://www.google.com/intl/en/about/company/facts/culture/> (accessed December 27, 2016).

WHAT COMMON CHARACTERISTICS DO ALL ORGANIZATIONS HAVE?

All organizations, regardless of their size or focus, share three common characteristics. First, every organization has a purpose. The distinct purpose of an organization is typically expressed in terms of a mission, vision, goal, or set of goals that the organization hopes to accomplish. Second, each organization is composed of people. People establish the purpose and perform a variety of activities to make the goal a reality. Third, all organizations develop a systematic structure that defines the various roles of members and often sets limits on members' work behaviors. This may include creating rules and regulations, giving some members supervisory responsibility over other members, forming work teams, or writing job descriptions so organizational members know their responsibilities.

Although organizations and their structures vary widely, often adapting to the environment in which the organization operates, we can show—in most traditional organizations—an organization's structure as a pyramid containing four general categories (see Exhibit 1-1).

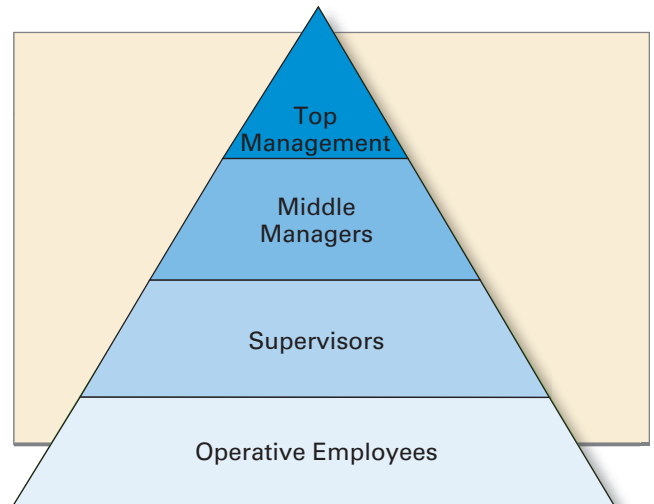


Exhibit 1-1

Levels in the traditional organizational pyramid.

WHAT ARE THE ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS?

Generally speaking, organizations can be divided into four distinct levels: operative employees, supervisors, middle managers, and top management. Let's briefly look at each level.

The base level in the pyramid is occupied by **operative employees**. These employees physically produce an organization's goods and services by working on specific tasks. The counter clerk at Burger King, the claims adjuster at Progressive Insurance, the assembly-line worker at the Toyota auto plant, and the UPS representative who delivers your packages are examples of operative employees. This category may also include many professional positions: doctors, lawyers, accountants, engineers, and information technology specialists. The common feature these operative workers share is that they generally don't manage or oversee the work of any other employee.

Now turn your attention to the top two levels in Exhibit 1-1. These are traditional management positions. **Top management** is a group of people responsible for establishing the organization's overall objectives and developing the policies to achieve those objectives. Titles of typical top management positions in business firms include chair of the board, chief executive officer, president, and senior vice-president. Among nonprofit organizations, top management may have such titles as museum director, superintendent of schools, or governor of a state. **Middle managers** include all employees below the top management level who manage other managers. These individuals are responsible for establishing and meeting specific goals in their particular department or unit. Their goals, however, are not established in isolation. Instead, the objectives set by top management provide specific direction to middle managers regarding what they are expected to achieve. Ideally, if each middle manager meets their goals, the entire organization meets its objectives. Examples of job titles held by middle managers include vice-president of finance, director of sales, division manager, group manager, district manager, unit manager, or high school principal.

Let's again return to Exhibit 1-1. The only category that we haven't described is **supervisors**. Like top and middle managers, supervisors are also part of an organization's management team. What makes them unique is that they oversee the work of operative employees. Supervisors, then, are the only managers who don't manage other managers. Another way to think of supervisors is as **first-level managers**. That is, counting from the bottom of the traditional pyramid-shaped organization, supervisors represent the first level in the management hierarchy.

operative employees

Employees who physically produce an organization's goods and services by working on specific tasks.

top management

A group of people responsible for establishing an organization's overall objectives and developing the policies to achieve those objectives.

middle managers

All employees below the top management level who manage other managers and are responsible for establishing and meeting specific departmental or unit goals set by top management.

supervisors

As part of an organization's management team, supervisors oversee the work of operative employees and are the only managers who don't manage other managers. *See also* first-level managers.

first-level managers

Managers who represent the first level in the management hierarchy. *See also* supervisors.

What kinds of titles are likely to tell you that someone is a supervisor? Though names may be sometimes deceiving, people with job titles such as assistant manager, department head, department chair, head coach, foreman, or team leader are typically in supervisory positions. An interesting aspect of supervisors' jobs is that they may engage in operating tasks with their employees. The counter clerk at Burger King may also be the shift supervisor. The claims supervisor at Progressive may also process claim forms. It is important to recognize that even though they perform operative tasks, supervisors are still part of management. That was made clear in 1947, when the U.S. Congress passed the Taft-Hartley Act. This act specifically excluded supervisors from the definition of *employee*. Moreover, the Taft-Hartley Act stated that any person who can "hire, suspend, transfer, lay off, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward, or discipline other employees while using independent judgment is a supervisor." Because first-level managers usually have this authority, the fact that they also engage in the same kind of work their employees perform in no way changes their management status. In reality, they are still expected to perform the duties and responsibilities associated with the management process.

OBJECTIVE 1.2

Define supervisor.

management

The process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people.

process

The primary activities supervisors perform.

efficiency

Doing a task right; also refers to the relationship between inputs and outputs.

effectiveness

Doing the right task; goal attainment.

The Management Process

Just as organizations have common characteristics, so, too, do managers at all levels of the organization. Although their titles vary widely, there are several common elements to their jobs—regardless of whether the supervisor is a head nurse in the Heart Center unit of the Washington Hospital Center who oversees a staff of eleven critical-care specialists, or the chief executive officer of the 82,000-plus-member ExxonMobil Corporation. In this section, we look at these commonalities as we discuss the management process and what managers do.

WHAT IS MANAGEMENT?

The term **management** refers to the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently, through and with other people. Several terms of this definition warrant some discussion: *process*, *efficiently*, and *effectively*.

The term **process** in the definition of management represents the primary activities that supervisors perform. We call these the management functions. The next section will describe these functions.

Efficiency means doing the task right, and refers to the relationship between inputs and outputs. If you get more output for a given input, you have increased efficiency. You also increase efficiency when you get the same output with fewer resources. Because supervisors deal with input resources that are scarce—money, people, and equipment—they are concerned with efficient use of these resources. Consequently, supervisors must be concerned with minimizing resource costs.

Although minimizing resource costs is important, it isn't enough simply to be efficient. A supervisor must also be concerned with completing activities. We call this **effectiveness**. Effectiveness means doing the right task. In an organization, this translates into goal attainment. Exhibit 1-2 shows how efficiency and effectiveness are interrelated. The need for efficiency has a profound effect on the level of effectiveness. It's easier to be effective if you ignore efficiency. For instance, you could produce more sophisticated and higher-quality products if you disregard labor and material input

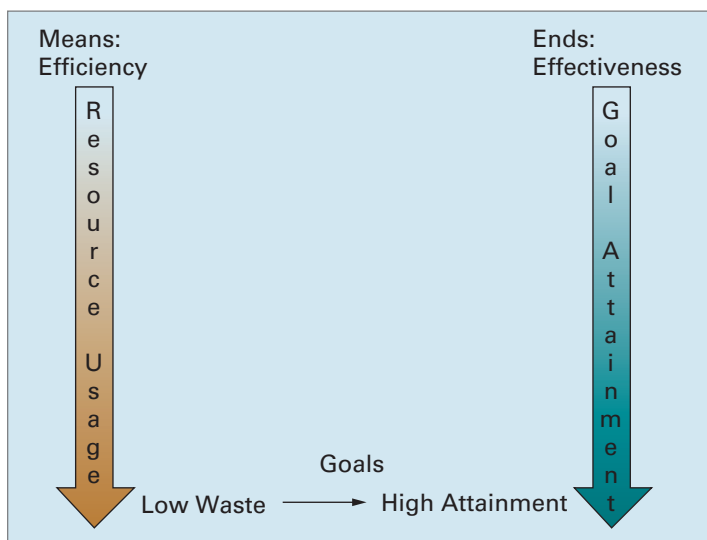


Exhibit 1-2

Efficiency versus effectiveness.

costs—yet that would more than likely create serious financial problems. Consequently,

being a good supervisor means being concerned with both attaining goals (effectiveness) and doing so as efficiently as possible.

WHAT ARE THE FOUR MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS?

In the early part of the twentieth century, a French industrialist named Henri Fayol wrote that all managers perform five **management functions**: They plan, organize, command, coordinate, and control.³ In the mid-1950s, two professors at UCLA used the functions of planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling as the framework for their management textbook.⁴ Most management textbooks continue to be organized around management functions, though these have generally been condensed to the basic four: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (see Exhibit 1-3).

Because organizations exist to achieve some purpose, someone has to define that purpose and the means for its achievement. A manager is that someone. The **planning** function encompasses defining an organization's goals, establishing an overall strategy for achieving those goals and developing a comprehensive hierarchy of plans to integrate and coordinate activities. Setting goals keeps the work to be done in its proper focus and helps organizational members keep their attention on what is most important.

Managers also have to divide work into manageable components and coordinate results to achieve objectives. This is the **organizing** function and includes determining which tasks will be done, who will do them, how the tasks will be grouped, who will report to whom, and when decisions will be made.

We know that every organization contains people, and that part of a manager's job is to direct and coordinate the activities of these people. Performing this activity is referred to as the **leading** function of management. When managers motivate employees, direct the activities of others, select the most effective communication channel, or resolve conflicts among members, they're engaging in leading.

The final function managers perform is **controlling**. After the goals are set, the plans formulated, the structural arrangements determined, and the people hired, trained, and motivated, something may still go amiss. To ensure that things are going as they should, a manager must monitor the organization's performance. Actual performance must be compared with the previously set goals. If there are any significant deviations, it's the manager's responsibility to get the organization back on track. This process of monitoring, comparing, and correcting constitutes the controlling function.

DO MANAGEMENT FUNCTIONS DIFFER BY ORGANIZATIONAL LEVELS?

A manager's level in an organization affects how these management functions are performed. A supervisor in the sales department at Black & Decker won't do the same kind of planning as Black & Decker's president. That's because although all managers perform the four management functions, there are important differences relating to

planning

defining an organization's goals, establishing an overall strategy for achieving those goals and developing a comprehensive hierarchy of plans to integrate and coordinate activities.

management functions

Planning, organizing, leading, and controlling.

organizing

Arranging and grouping jobs, allocating resources, and assigning work so that activities can be accomplished as planned; determining which tasks are to be done, who is to do them, how the tasks are to be grouped, who reports to whom, and when decisions are to be made.

leading

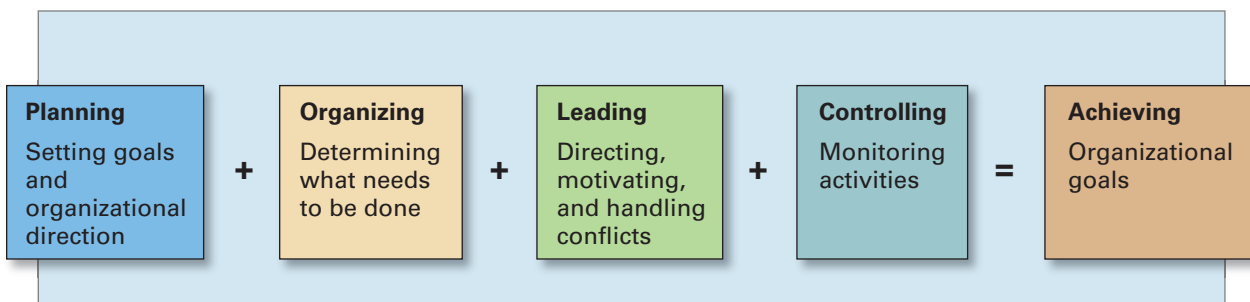
Motivating employees, directing activities of others, selecting the most effective communication channel, and resolving conflicts among members.

controlling

Monitoring an organization's performance and comparing performance with previously set goals. If significant deviations exist, getting the organization back on track.

Exhibit 1-3

Management functions.



³H. Fayol, *Industrial and General Administration* (Paris: Dunod, 1916).

⁴H. Koontz and C. O'Donnell, *Principles of Management: An Analysis of Managerial Functions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1955).

their level. Typically, top management focuses on long-term strategic planning, such as determining in what overall business a company should be. Supervisors focus on short-term, tactical planning such as scheduling departmental workloads for the next month. Similarly, top management is concerned with structuring the overall organization, whereas supervisors focus on structuring the jobs of individuals and workgroups.

OBJECTIVE 1.3

Identify the four functions in the management process.

Changing Expectations of Supervisors

Seventy years ago, if you had asked a group of top executives what they thought a supervisor's job was, you would have gotten a fairly standard answer. They would describe a man (which it was likely to be back then) who forcefully made decisions, told employees what to do, closely watched over those employees to make sure they did as they were told, disciplined them when they broke the rules, and fired those that didn't "shape up." Supervisors were the bosses "on the operating floor," and their job was to keep the employees in line and get the work out.

If you ask top executives that same question today, you'll find a few who still hold to the supervisor-as-boss perspective, but you'll also hear executives describe today's supervisor using terms such as *trainer*, *adviser*, *mentor*, *facilitator*, or *coach*. In this section, we look at some of these changing expectations of supervisory managers.

WHAT ROLES DO SUPERVISORS PLAY?

The supervisor's job is unique in that it bridges the management ranks with the operating employees. No one else in the organization can make that claim. Yet because of this uniqueness, supervisors have an ambiguous role. Each of the following offers a different viewpoint of the supervisor's role:⁵

Key person Supervisors serve as the critical communication link in the organization's chain of authority. They are like the hub of a wheel around which all operating activities revolve.

Person in the middle Because they are "neither fish nor fowl," supervisors must interact and reconcile the opposing forces and competing expectations from higher management and workers. If unresolved, this conflicting role can create frustration and stress for supervisors.

Just another worker Some people, particularly upper-level managers, see supervisors as "just another worker," rather than as management. This is reinforced when their decision-making authority is limited, when they're excluded from participating in upper-level decisions, and when they perform operating tasks alongside the same people they supervise.

Behavioral specialist Consistent with the belief that one of the most important abilities needed by supervisors is strong interpersonal skills, they are looked at as behavioral specialists. To succeed in their jobs, supervisors must be able to understand the varied needs of their staff and be able to listen, motivate, and lead.

Although each of these four role descriptions has some truth to it, each also offers a slanted view of the supervisor's job. Our point is that different people hold different perceptions of this job, which can create ambiguity and conflicts for today's supervisor.

⁵Based on J. Newstrom and K. Davis, *Organizational Behavior: Human Behavior at Work*, 9th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1993), 239.

Comprehension Check 1-1

1. All of the following except one are characteristics of all organizations. Which one is not a characteristic?
 - a. Purpose
 - b. Profit
 - c. People
 - d. Structure
2. The term *process* in the definition of management refers to:
 - a. the primary activities supervisors perform on their jobs.
 - b. the transformation of raw materials into goods.
 - c. the relationship between doing a task correctly and doing the correct task.
 - d. the means of goal attainment.
3. The management function that involves monitoring activities to ensure that targets are being met is called:
 - a. planning.
 - b. organizing.
 - c. leading.
 - d. controlling.
4. A key person in a supervisory role is someone who:
 - a. interacts with opposing forces to reconcile differences.
 - b. serves as the critical communication link in the organization.
 - c. is just another worker.
 - d. has a strong ability to listen and understand what is being said.

ARE SUPERVISORS MORE IMPORTANT IN TODAY'S ORGANIZATIONS?

Regardless of what people think and the different role perceptions they hold, a case can be built that the supervisor's job will continue to become increasingly important and complex in the future. Why? We can provide at least three reasons.

First, organizations are implementing significant change and quality programs to cut costs and increase productivity. Examples of these programs include continuous quality improvements, the introduction of work teams, group bonus plans, flexible work hours, and accident-prevention and stress-reduction programs. These programs tend to focus on the work activities of operating employees. As a result, supervisors have become increasingly important because they typically assume responsibility for introducing and implementing these change efforts at the operations level.

Second, organizations are making extensive cutbacks in their number of employees. Boeing, General Motors, United Airlines, Motorola, IBM, and American Express are just a few of the major companies that have cut anywhere from 1,000 to 50,000 jobs. Organizations are constantly thinning their ranks among middle managers and staff-support personnel. "Lean and mean" continues to be a major theme for the best corporations. The implications of these cutbacks will be that supervisors have more people directly reporting to them. Moreover, many tasks previously performed by people in support units—such as work design, process flow, scheduling, and quality control—will be reassigned to supervisors and their employees. The net effect will be significantly expanded responsibilities for supervisors.

Finally, employee training is more important than ever as organizations seek to improve productivity. New employees—many of whom are poorly prepared for work or have language or communication deficiencies—require basic training in reading, writing, and mathematics. Changes in jobs brought about by computers, automation, and other

employee engagement

When employees are connected to, satisfied with, and enthusiastic about their jobs.

technological advances require additional skills training among current employees to prevent their skills from becoming obsolete. Supervisors will carry the primary burden for identifying these skill deficiencies, designing appropriate training programs, and in some cases, even providing the training itself.

Obviously, being a supervisor is both challenging and exciting. One thing we know for sure is that supervisors matter to organizations. The Gallup Organization, which has polled millions of employees and tens of thousands of supervisors, has found that the single most important variable in employee productivity and loyalty isn't pay or benefits or workplace environment; it's the quality of the relationship between employees and their direct supervisors. Gallup also found that a relationship with their manager is the largest factor in **employee engagement**—which is when employees are connected to, satisfied with, and enthusiastic about their jobs—accounting for at least 70 percent of an employee's level of engagement.⁶ Gallup also found when companies increase their number of talented managers and double the rate of engaged employees, their earnings per share is 147 percent higher than their competitors.⁷ The same research showed that talented managers contribute about 48 percent higher profit to their companies than average managers⁸. Lastly, another study showed that when a poor manager was replaced with a great one, employee productivity increased by 12 percent⁹. What can we conclude from such reports? Supervisors matter, and will continue to matter, to organizations!

IS SUSTAINABILITY IMPORTANT TO A SUPERVISOR?

Organizations recognize the need to add products that will meet the challenges of a changing world, and contemporary corporate action affirms that sustainability and green management have become mainstream issues for supervisors. What's emerging in the twenty-first century is the concept of managing in a sustainable way, which has had the effect of widening corporate responsibility not only to supervising in an efficient and effective way, but also to responding strategically to a wide range of environmental and societal challenges.¹⁰ Although "sustainable development" means different things to different people, in essence, according to the United Nations in their Brundtland Commission Report (1987), it is concerned with "meeting¹¹ the needs of people today without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." From a business perspective, **sustainability** has been defined as a company's ability to achieve its business goals and increase long-term shareholder value by integrating economic, environmental, and social opportunities into its business strategies.¹² Sustainability issues are now moving up the agenda of business leaders and the boards of thousands of companies. As supervisors at Walmart are discovering, running an organization in a more sustainable way will mean they have to make informed business decisions based on thorough communication with various stakeholders, understanding their requirements, and starting to factor economic, environmental, and social aspects into how they pursue their business goals.

sustainability

A company's ability to achieve its business goals and increase long-term shareholder value by integrating economic, environmental, and social opportunities into its business strategies.

⁶J. Harter and A. Adkins, "Employees Want a Lot More from Their Managers," April 8, 2015, http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/182321/employees-lot-managers.aspx?g_source=Employees%20Want%20a%20Lot%20More%20From%20Their%20Managers&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles (Accessed December 28, 2016)

⁷R. Beck and J. Harter, "Why Great Managers Are So Rare," March 26, 2014, http://www.gallup.com/businessjournal/167975/why-great-managers-rare.aspx?g_source=Why%20Great%20Managers%20Are%20So%20Rare&g_medium=search&g_campaign=tiles (Accessed December 28, 2016)

⁸Ibid

⁹S. Bailey, "No Manager Left Behind," Chief Learning Officer, February 3, 2015, <http://www.clomedia.com/2015/02/03/no-manager-left-behind/> (Accessed December 28, 2016).

¹⁰KPMG Global Sustainability Services, *Sustainability Insights*, October 2007.

¹¹World Commission on Environment and Development, Brundtland Commission, *Our Common Future* (Oxford University Press, 1987), "Our Common Future, Chapter 2: Towards Sustainable Development" <http://un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm> (accessed December 28, 2016)

¹²*Symposium on Sustainability—Profiles in Leadership*, New York, October 2001.

DOES A SUPERVISOR NEED TO BE A COACH?

Today's supervisors are far less likely to be able to do all aspects of their employees' jobs. Supervisors need to know what their employees are doing, but they are not necessarily expected to be as skilled at specific job tasks as each employee. Moreover, employees don't need an authority figure to tell them what to do or to "keep them in line." Instead, they may need a coach who can listen to, guide, train, and assist them. In their coaching role, supervisors are expected to ensure that their employees have the resources they need to do a first-class job. They must also develop their employees' skills and knowledge, clarify responsibilities and goals, motivate employees to higher levels of performance, and represent their workgroup's interests within the organization.



Cathy Yeulet/123RF.com

Like athletic coaches, today's supervisors need to get their employees "ready for the game" and cheer them on to success.

Transition from Employee to Supervisor

It wasn't easy making the move from being one of the quality-control specialists in the department to being the supervisor. On Friday, I had been one of them. The next Monday, I became their boss. Suddenly, people with whom I had joked around and socialized for years were distancing themselves from me. I could see that they were apprehensive. They weren't sure, now, if I could be trusted. I didn't think our relationship was going to be much different. Hey, we were friends. We went out together every Friday after work. But I'm management now. I still think I'm like them—part of the group. But they don't see me that way. Even when I join them for drinks, it's not like it used to be. They have their guard up now. It's been a hard adjustment for me.

These comments from an individual promoted to quality-control supervisor at Monsanto capture the dilemma many new supervisors face when they're promoted from the ranks.

It's important to reflect for a moment on what this step of becoming a supervisor really means. For many in the workforce, becoming a supervisor is a major turning point in their career. It's a time when one becomes responsible not only for one's own work but also for the work of others. It's a time when authority is given to someone—and that authority can be used in a variety of ways. It's a time of added responsibility and accountability to the organization—when one becomes part of the management team.

Although for many this is an exciting time, being a supervisor can present challenges. Meeting goals, making appropriate decisions, supervising employees, and being the communication vehicle for information that needs to be conveyed to employees can be overwhelming. But they can also be rewarding when one has the skills and competencies to be an effective supervisor.

A number of recent surveys of first-time supervisors reveal a broad spectrum of reactions to, and realities of, their supervisory position. Ten percent of supervisors say they're prepared, trained and qualified, and yet 48 percent of first-time supervisors fail. Although 68 percent of supervisors confess they really don't like being in their position, 40 percent of supervisors are ranked in the top ninetieth percentile of effectiveness, and 40 percent are reported to be in the bottom tenth percentile of effectiveness. And yet, 42 percent of new supervisors believe they know how to succeed at their jobs. Ninety percent of workers



Dotshock/Shutterstock

Supervisors must understand that supervising employees today is dramatically different from in the past. A supervisor must act as a coach rather than as a task-master. This translates into being aware of employees' needs and being willing to let them do their jobs, giving support wherever it is needed.

who responded to a survey said that good supervisors are effective in increasing their loyalty to the company, and 42 percent of workers responding said that communicating ideas/expectations clearly was the most important quality in a good boss.¹³ In this section, we look at the primary roads people take to becoming supervisors, and the challenges they face in mastering a new identity.

WHERE DO SUPERVISORS COME FROM?

Many new supervisors are promoted from within the ranks of their current employers. The second major source of supervisory personnel is new college graduates. Occasionally, employees from other organizations are hired to become first-line supervisors; however, this is increasingly rare because if employers have an open supervisory position, they often prefer to fill it with someone they know and who knows the organization. That favors promoting from within.

Employers tend to promote operative employees to first-line management jobs for several reasons. Operative employees know how the operations function. They understand how things are done in the organization. They typically know the people they'll be supervising. Another advantage is that the organization knows a lot about the candidate. When management promotes "one of its own" into a supervisory position, it minimizes risk. When hiring from the outside, management must rely on limited information provided by previous employers. By promoting from within, management can draw on its full history with a candidate. Finally, and most importantly, promoting from within acts as an employee motivator by providing an incentive for employees to work hard and excel.

What criteria does management tend to use in deciding who to promote into first-line managerial positions? Employees with good work records and an interest in management tend to be favored. Ironically, not all "good" operative employees make good supervisors. The reason is that people with strong technical skills don't necessarily have the skills needed to manage others. Organizations that successfully promote from the ranks select employees with adequate technical skills and provide them with supervisory training early in their new assignments.

Recent college graduates provide the other primary source of candidates for supervisory positions. Two-year and four-year college programs in supervision and management provide a basic foundation for preparing for the supervisor's job. With additional organizational training, many new college graduates are equipped to step into first-line management.

IS THE TRANSITION TO SUPERVISOR DIFFICULT?

Moving from one middle-management job to another, or from a middle-management position to one in top management, rarely creates the anxiety that comes when one moves from being an employee to being a supervisor. It's a lot like being a parent. If you already have three kids, the addition of one more isn't too big a deal. Why? Because you already know quite a bit about parenting—and you've been through it before. The challenge lies in the transition from being childless to being a parent for the first time. The same applies here. The challenge is unique when one moves into first-line management; it is unlike anything managers will encounter later in their rise up the organizational ladder.¹⁴

¹³Based on D. Zack, "Lead From Your Strengths," *T&D*, February 2013, pp. 72–73; M. S. Plakotnik and T. S. Rocco, "A Succession Plan for First-Time Managers," *T&D*, December 2011, pp. 42–45; D. Zack, "How to Manage When You Hate Being a Boss," www.fastcompany.com, September 26, 2012; A. Fox, "Help Managers Shine," *HR Magazine*, February 2013, pp. 43–48; A. Fisher, "Unhappy Manager? You're Far from Alone," management.fortune.cnn.com, July 20, 2012; J. Yang and P. Trap, "What Is Effective in Increasing Your Loyalty to Your Company," *USA Today*, August 14, 2012, p.1B; D. Meinert, "Executive Briefing," *HR Magazine*, May 2012, p. 18; and K. Plombino, "No. 1 Quality in a Good Boss?" hrcommunications.com, November 26, 2012.

¹⁴See, for example, R. D. Ramsey, "So You've Been Promoted or Changed Jobs. Now What?" *Supervision*, November 1998, 6–8.

A previous study of what nineteen new supervisors experienced in their first year on the job helps us to better understand what it's like to become a first-line manager.¹⁵ Fourteen men and five women participated in this study. All worked in sales or marketing. However, their experiences are relevant to anyone making the employee-supervisor transition.

Even though these new supervisors had worked in their respective organizations as salespeople for an average of six years, their expectations of a supervisory position were incomplete and simplistic. They didn't appreciate the full range of demands that would be made on them. Each had previously been a star salesperson. They were promoted, in large part, as a reward for their good performance. But good performance for a salesperson and good performance for a supervisor are very different—and few of these new supervisors understood that. Ironically, their previous successes in sales may actually have made their transition to management more difficult. Because of their strong technical expertise and high motivation, they depended on their supervisors less than the average salesperson for support and guidance. When they became supervisors and suddenly had to deal with low-performing and unmotivated employees, they weren't prepared for it.

The nineteen new supervisors actually encountered a number of surprises. We briefly summarize the major ones because they capture the essence of what many supervisors encounter as they attempt to master their new identity.

Their initial view of the manager as “boss” was incorrect Before taking their supervisory jobs, these managers-to-be talked about the power they would have and of being in control. As one put it, “Now I'll be the one calling the shots.” After a month, they spoke of being a “troubleshooter,” a “juggler,” and a “quick-change artist.” All emphasized solving problems, making decisions, helping others, and providing resources as their primary responsibilities. They no longer conceived of their jobs as being “the boss.”

They were unprepared for the demands and ambiguities they would face In their first week, these supervisors were surprised by the unrelenting workload and pace of being a manager. On a typical day, they had to work on many problems simultaneously and were met with constant interruptions.

Technical expertise was no longer the primary determinant of success or failure The supervisors were used to excelling by performing specific technical tasks and being individual contributors, not by acquiring managerial competence and getting things done through others. It took four to six months on the job for most to come to grips with the fact that they now would be judged by their ability to motivate others to high performance.

A supervisor's job comes with administrative duties These supervisors found that routine communication activities such as paperwork and exchange of information were time consuming and interfered with their autonomy.

They weren't prepared for the “people challenges” of their new jobs The supervisors unanimously asserted that the most demanding skills they had to learn in their first year dealt with managing people. They expressed being particularly uncomfortable in counseling employees and providing leadership. As one stated, “I hadn't realized . . . how hard it is to motivate people or develop them or deal with their personal problems.”

Given this and similar issues that arise when one becomes a supervisor, what does it take to be an effective supervisor? What competencies or general categories of skills are needed? Are these the same, regardless of one's level in the organization? We answer these questions in the next section.

¹⁵This section is based on L. A. Hill, *Becoming a Manager: Mastery of New Identity* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1992).

DO YOU REALLY WANT TO BE A SUPERVISOR?

The fact that you're learning about supervision indicates you're interested in understanding how to supervise people. What is it about supervising people that excites you? Is it the fact that you can help an organization achieve its goals? Is it the challenge of supervising others—directing their work—that interests you? Is it the fact that supervision may lead to a management position and hopes of climbing the career ladder? Whatever your reasons, you need a clear picture of what lies ahead.

Supervisory positions are not easy. Even if you've been a superstar as an employee, this is no guarantee that you'll succeed as a supervisor. The fact that you are capable of doing excellent work is a big plus, but there are many other factors to consider. You need to recognize that supervising others may mean longer work hours. You're often on the job before your employees and leave after they do. Supervising can literally be a twenty-four-hours-a-day, seven-days-a-week job. Now, that's not to be interpreted as being on the job every hour of every day. But when you accept the responsibility of supervising others, you really never can "get away" from the job. Things happen, and you'll be expected to deal with them—no matter when they happen or where you are. It's not unheard of to get a call while you're on vacation if problems arise. Organizational policy may require peers and subordinates to contact you via cell phone in the event of any unforeseen event. How was someone in the organization able to contact you during your getaway? You are probably required by organizational policy to provide emergency contact information, and to call in periodically to see how things are going.

You also need to recognize that as a supervisor, you may have a seemingly endless pile of paperwork to complete. Although organizations are continually working to eliminate much of their paperwork, much still remains. This may include employee work schedules, production cost estimates, inventory documentation, or budget and payroll matters.

Another matter of importance that you should consider is the effect the supervisor's job may have on your pay! In some organizations, a raise in your base pay when you become a supervisor may not translate into higher annual earnings. How so? Consider that, as a supervisor, you are generally no longer eligible for overtime pay or commission. Instead, you may get compensatory (comp) time (time off). When you are an operative employee, your organization is legally required to pay you a premium rate (typically time-and-a-half) for overtime work. That may not be true when you become a supervisor. If you get a \$6,000 raise when you become a supervisor, but earned \$6,500 last year in overtime, you're actually earning less as a supervisor. This is something that you'll need to discuss with your organization before making your decision to become a supervisor.

What are the previous paragraphs really saying? They're telling you to think about why you want to supervise. Managing others can be rewarding. The excitement is real—and so are the headaches. You need to understand exactly what your motives are for becoming a supervisor, and what trade-offs you're willing to make to become the best supervisor you can be.

OBJECTIVE 1.5

Describe the four essential supervisory competencies.

supervisory competencies

Conceptual, interpersonal, technical, and political competencies.

Supervisory Competencies

More than thirty years ago, Professor Robert Katz began a process of identifying essential **supervisory competencies**.¹⁶ What Katz and others have found is that successful supervisors must possess four critical competencies: technical, interpersonal, conceptual, and political competencies. They are as relevant today as when Katz originally described them.

¹⁶R. L. Katz, "Skills of an Effective Administrator," *Harvard Business Review*, September–October 1974, 90–102; and B. Humphrey and J. Stokes, "The 21st Century Supervisor," *HR Magazine*, May 2000, 185–192.

Something to Think About (and promote class discussion)

BECOMING A SUPERVISOR

Becoming a supervisor is a challenging opportunity. Some individuals look forward to “taking the helm” of a crew of workers, whereas others are put into this situation with little advance notice or training. As you consider going into a supervisory position—or making yourself a more effective supervisor than you are today—think about the following two areas:

1. List five reasons why you want to be a supervisor.
2. Identify five potential problems or difficulties that you may encounter when you become a supervisor.

WHAT IS TECHNICAL COMPETENCE?

Top management is composed of generalists. The activities that consume top managers—strategic planning, developing the organization’s overall structure and culture, maintaining relations with major customers and bankers, marketing the product, and the like—are essentially generic in nature. The technical demands of top management jobs tend to be related to knowledge of the industry and a general understanding of the organization’s processes and products. This isn’t true for managers at other levels.

Most supervisors manage within areas of specialized knowledge: the vice-president of human resources, the director of computer systems, the regional sales manager, and the supervisor of health claims. These supervisors require **technical competence**, which is the ability to apply specialized knowledge or expertise. It’s difficult, if not impossible, to supervise employees with specialized skills effectively if you don’t have an adequate understanding of the technical aspects of their jobs. Although the supervisor need not be able to perform certain technical skills, understanding what each worker does is part of every supervisor’s job. For example, the task of scheduling workflow requires technical competence to determine what needs to be done.

technical competence

The ability to apply specialized knowledge or expertise.

NEWS FLASH!

THE SUPERVISOR’S ROLE IN MODERN ORGANIZATIONS

For years, the role of the working or front-line supervisor has been considered by many organizations to be little more than a stepping-stone into management. Business and management schools devoted their attention primarily to teaching principles and theories applicable to upper management. Many professors figured their graduates would hold down beginning supervisory roles for a short period and then move into something more challenging. How things have changed!

Today’s organizations are complex. Some of the complexity is a result, in part, of the following:

- A more culturally diverse workforce than ever before.
- Molding a productive team out of a mix of full-timers, part-timers, “temps,” and contract workers.
- Implementation of quality and productivity programs such as ISO certification and Six Sigma, just-in-time and lean manufacturing, and organizing work using self-directed teams.
- Enforcing the ever-growing number of employment laws pertaining to hiring and dismissal, antidiscrimination, sexual harassment, disability accommodation, workplace violence, Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) of 1993, Occupational Safety and Health Administration

(continued)

Continued

(OSHA), Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) of 1996, worker's compensation, overtime, and ergonomics.

- Globalization and international competition, downsizing, outsourcing, and flattening of the organizational structure by removing levels of management.

The Good News for Supervisors

To meet all the challenges inherent in the complexity of modern organizations, the role of the front-line supervisor has changed dramatically. This is great news for someone aspiring to become a front-line supervisor because, although challenging, these changes present tremendous career and growth opportunities.

1. *The stature of the front-line supervisor has been elevated.* Instead of being a bit player at the bottom rung of the management ladder, the supervisor has become a key position. The obvious reason is that many middle and upper-level management positions have been eliminated. Organizations are “flattening” their organizational hierarchy. There are fewer middle and upper-level managers in flat organizations. The flat organizational structure means more authority, power, and responsibility are being delegated to lower-level managerial positions. The talent and skill of the supervisor in a flat organization is a major factor to its success.
2. *Empowerment of the supervisor's job is ongoing.* Some of the “power” previously held by those whose jobs have been eliminated will be delegated to the supervisors they used to supervise. This shift means that line supervisors or “team leaders” of the past can take a more positive stance. They can submit new suggestions with more freedom and more influence. In short, the line supervisor will play a bigger role in the total management team. Upper management (those who remain) will have to listen more and react to what they hear.
3. *Supervisors have more autonomy.* With fewer directives to follow, fewer inspections from those above, and fewer people to please, supervisors have the power and responsibility

to run their departments or “teams” more like the owner of a small business might do. Supervisors will be encouraged to operate with more authority while also being held accountable.

4. *Supervisors receive more advanced training.* As upper management shifts additional responsibilities to their front-line supervisors, they will provide more training to help them succeed. In addition, more supervisors will appoint assistants and prepare them for temporary “takeover” roles when they are absent. In other words, front-line supervisors will move closer to those upper-management leaders who remain with the firm and whose roles, in turn, will be expanded.
5. *Supervisors derive tremendous personal benefits from their role in today's business culture.* For example:
 - Effective supervisors will be easier to spot and will be “first call” on promotional possibilities.
 - Women who excel as front-line supervisors will discover that the so-called glass ceiling is less likely to affect them.
 - The challenges of front-line supervision provide a great training ground and preparation for upper-management positions.
 - Supervision offers the opportunity to engage in meaningful and challenging work that will enhance one's self-respect and the respect from others.
 - Supervisors will receive more immediate positive reinforcement of their contribution to organizational success as a result of leading their employees through collaborative and team-based approaches than was possible through former top-down management methods.
 - Supervisors will have greater opportunities to engage in continuous learning, which is a top motivator.

Sources: Goodwin, Cliff B.; Griffith, Daniel B., *Supervisors Survival Kit*, 11th., © 2009. Printed and Electronically reproduced by permission of Pearson Education, Inc., Upper Saddle River, New Jersey.

HOW DO INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCIES HELP?

The ability to work well with people, understand their needs, communicate well, and motivate others—both individually and in groups—constitutes **interpersonal competence**. Many people are technically proficient but interpersonally incompetent. They might be poor listeners, be unconcerned with the needs of others, or have difficulty dealing with conflicts. Supervisors get things done through other people. They must have good interpersonal skills to communicate, motivate, negotiate, delegate, and resolve conflicts.

interpersonal competence

The ability to work with, understand, communicate with, and motivate other people, both individually and in groups.

WHAT IS CONCEPTUAL COMPETENCE?

Conceptual competence is the mental ability to analyze and diagnose complex situations. Strong conceptual abilities allow a supervisor to see that the organization is a complex system of many interrelated parts and that the organization itself is part of a larger system that includes the organization's industry, the community, and the nation's economy. This gives the supervisor a broad perspective and contributes to creative problem solving. On a more practical level, strong conceptual abilities help managers make good decisions.

conceptual competence

The mental ability to analyze and diagnose complex situations.

WHY MUST ONE HAVE POLITICAL COMPETENCE?

Political competence is the supervisors' ability to enhance their power, build a power base, and establish the "right" connections in the organization. Supervisors engage in politics when they attempt to influence the advantages and disadvantages of a situation. It goes beyond normal work activities. Whenever two or more people come together for some purpose, each has some idea of what should occur. If people try to influence the situation such that it benefits them more than the others, or keeps others from gaining some advantage, politics is "being played." But not all political behavior is negative. It doesn't have to involve manipulating a series of events, complaining about fellow supervisors, or sabotaging the work or reputation of another to further one's career. There's a fine line between appropriate political behavior and negative politics. We will come back to organizational politics in Chapter 14.

political competence

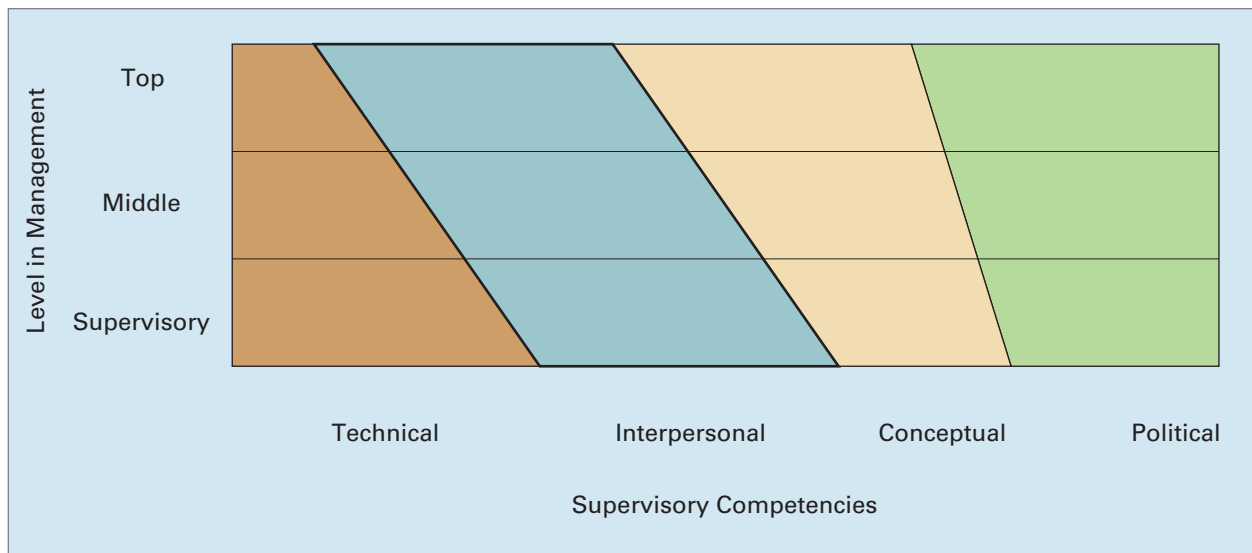
Supervisors' ability to enhance their power, build a power base, and establish the "right" connections in the organization.

HOW DO COMPETENCIES SHIFT BY MANAGERIAL LEVEL?

Although supervisors need to possess all the four competencies, the importance of each competency in any manager's job varies with the individual's level in the organization. As Exhibit 1-4 illustrates, (1) technical competence declines in importance as individuals rise in the organization; (2) interpersonal competencies are a constant for success, regardless of level in the organization; and (3) conceptual and political competencies increase in importance as managerial responsibility rises.

Technical abilities typically have the greatest relevance for first-level managers. This is true for two reasons. First, many supervisors perform technical work as well as managerial work. In contrast to other levels of management, the distinction between individual contributor and first-line manager is often blurred. Second, supervisors spend more time on training and developing their employees than do other managers. This requires them to have a greater technical knowledge of their employees' jobs than that needed by middle- and top-level managers.

There is overwhelming evidence that interpersonal abilities are critical at all levels of management. This shouldn't come as a shock because we know that managers get things done through other people. Supervisors are particularly in need of interpersonal competencies because they spend so much of their time in leading-function activities. When we talked with dozens of practicing supervisors, the one common viewpoint they shared was the importance of people skills to the successful achievement of their units' objectives.

**Exhibit 1-4**

How competency demands vary at different levels of management.

The importance of conceptual competence increases as managers move up in the organization. This is because of the types of problems managers encounter and the decisions they make at higher levels. Generally speaking, the higher managers rise in an organization, the more the problems they face tend to be complex, ambiguous, and ill defined. These problems require custom-made solutions. In contrast, supervisors generally have more straightforward, familiar, and easily defined problems, which lend themselves to more routine decision-making. Ill-structured problems and custom-made solutions make greater conceptual demands on managers than do structured problems and routine decision-making.

Finally, the higher one climbs in the organization's hierarchy, the more critical political competence becomes. Because resource-allocation decisions are made at higher levels in an organization, middle and top managers are "fighting" for their piece of the organizational pie. Their need to develop alliances, support one project over another, or influence certain situations involves higher-level political skills. But don't interpret this as implying that politics are less important for supervisors. Because so much of the supervisor's job is well-defined, they need strong political skills to get their unit's work completed and to survive.

OBJECTIVE 1.6

Identify the elements that are necessary to be successful as a supervisor.

From Concepts to Skills

Knowledge about a subject is important, but just as important is whether you can do anything with that knowledge. Can you put your knowledge into practice? Just as you wouldn't want a surgeon who had never operated on anyone taking a knife to you, or to fly on an aircraft with a pilot who's never flown, it's not enough for you to just know about supervision. You should be able to actually supervise! You can learn to be an effective supervisor. No one is born with supervisory skills, although some people have a head start.

It's true that supervision comes easier to some people than to others. Individuals who are fortunate enough to have parents, relatives, or friends who supervise employees have role models to emulate and give them insights into what the job entails. Similarly, individuals whose parents helped them set realistic goals, provided positive feedback, encouraged autonomy, practiced open communication, and fostered the development

of a strong self-concept have learned behaviors that will help them as supervisors. Also, those who have had the fortune to work for a good supervisor have a role model to imitate. However, those without these advantages can improve their supervisory abilities. This text will help you to be an effective supervisor by focusing on both conceptual knowledge and practical skills. In a succeeding chapter, for example, we discuss the importance of planning to a supervisor's success and show how setting goals is a key part of planning. Then, we present specific techniques for helping employees set goals and provide you with an opportunity to practice and develop your goal-setting skills.

WHAT IS A SKILL?

A **skill** is the ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behavior that is functionally related to attaining a performance goal.¹⁷ No single action constitutes a skill. For example, the ability to write clear communications is a skill. People who have this skill know the particular sequence of actions to take to propose a project or summarize a report. They can separate primary from secondary ideas. They can organize their thoughts in a logical manner. They can simplify complex ideas. None of these actions is by itself a skill. A skill is a system of behavior that can be applied in a wide range of situations.

Which key skills are related to supervisory effectiveness? Although there is no unanimous agreement among teachers and trainers of supervision, certain skills have surfaced as being more important than others. Exhibit 1-5 lists key supervisory skills, organized as they are presented in this text. In aggregate, they form the competency base for effective supervision.

skill

The ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behavior that is functionally related to attaining a performance goal.

WHAT ELSE IS CRITICAL FOR ME TO KNOW ABOUT SUPERVISING?

By now, you may be somewhat amazed by what supervisors have to do and the skills they must have to succeed in an organization, but you should consider several other elements. Specifically, what personal issues should you address? Let's look at these.

One of the first things you'll need to do is to recognize that you are part of management as a supervisor. This means that you support the organization and the wishes of management above you. Although you might disagree with those wishes, as a supervisor, you must be loyal to the organization. You must also develop a means of gaining respect from your employees, as well as your peers and boss. If you're going to be effective as a supervisor, you'll need to develop their trust and build credibility with them. One means of doing this is to keep your skills and competencies up to date. You must continue your education, not only because it helps you, but also because it sets an example for your employees. It communicates that learning matters.

You'll also have to understand what legitimate power you have been given by the organization because you direct the activities of others. This legitimate power is your authority to act and expect others to follow your directions. Yet ruling with an iron fist may not work. Accordingly, you'll need to know when to assert your authority and how to get things done without resorting to "Because I told you

Exhibit 1-5

Key supervisory skills.

Related to Planning and Control

- Goal setting
- Budgeting
- Creative problem solving
- Developing control charts

Related to Organizing, Staffing, and Employee Development

- Empowering others
- Interviewing
- Providing feedback
- Coaching

Related to Stimulating Individual and Group Performance

- Designing motivating jobs
- Projecting charisma
- Listening
- Conducting a group meeting

Related to Coping with Workplace Dynamics

- Negotiation
- Stress reduction
- Counseling
- Disciplining
- Handling grievances

¹⁷R. E. Boyatzis, *The Competent Manager: A Model for Effective Performance* (New York: Wiley, 1982), 33.

so.” In the latter case, you need to develop interpersonal skills that help you influence others. This is particularly true when dealing with organizational members whom you don’t supervise.

Finally, you’ll need to recognize that organizational members are different—not only in their talents, but as individuals. You’ll need to be sensitive to their needs, tolerate and even celebrate their differences, and be empathetic to them as individuals. Success, in part, begins with understanding what being flexible means. Throughout this text, we address each of these areas. For instance, in the next chapter, we will introduce you to the diversity of the workforce and what that may mean for you. In Chapter 9, we will introduce trust and credibility and their role in your leadership effectiveness.

OBJECTIVE 1.7

Identify the value of studying supervision.

Why Study Supervision?

A good number of students regularly tell us they are not planning a career in supervision and never plan to be in a supervisory position. These students identify their career goals in computer information, engineering, accounting, communication, and marketing without ever seeing themselves in a leadership position within the organization. They ask: Why do I need to take a course in supervision? How will studying supervision help my career?

Our answer: Because understanding supervision concepts and how supervisors think will help you get better results at work and enhance your career. As a parent, leader, and supervisor, you are in the unique position of offering support and guidance to followers who will benefit from your knowledge and experience. Successful employees are regularly promoted to supervisory roles. Even though you may begin your career in your major field of study, life and opportunity often have a way of taking you far afield, and a few years later, you’re overseeing a team in your own entrepreneurial startup or you’re an organizational partner thrust into supervising an expanding office. So, if you expect to work with others—whether it’s in a Fortune 100 corporation or in your own three-person startup—studying supervision can pay big dividends when it comes to your ability to lead and influence followers.

Throughout *Supervision Today!*, you’ll come upon sections we call “**Something to Think About**” and “**News Flash!**” These features will introduce you to challenges you’re likely to face at work—such as organizational politics, an uncommunicative boss, or an unfair performance review—and offer you specific suggestions on how to deal with these challenges. These challenging features, paired with the comprehensive chapter coverage of leadership topics and chapter-ending “**Developing Your Supervisory Skills**” section, will help develop your communication, critical thinking, and collaboration skills.

As an outcome of interacting with *Supervision Today!* We hope you come to the realization that supervision is needed in all types and sizes of organizations, at all organizational levels, in all organizational areas, and in all organizations no matter where they may be located. Because of the widespread need for supervisors to plan, organize, lead, and control we want to find ways to improve the way organizations are supervised. However, that’s not to say that supervision is done the same way everywhere; it is mostly a matter of degree and emphasis, not function. Because situations and context vary by organization, it is easy to say that even though supervisors will plan, organize, lead, and control, how much and how they do so will differ widely.

Supervision is commonly needed in all organizations because people interact with organizations every single day. Organizations that are well-supervised will develop a loyal employee and customer base, grow, and prosper, even during challenging times. Those that are poorly supervised find themselves losing employees, customers, and revenues. The study of supervision will enable you to identify poor leadership and work to

get it corrected. In addition, you'll be able to recognize and support good supervision, regardless of whether you're interacting with it as a customer or an employee.

A more realistic reason to study supervision is the simple fact that for most of you, once you graduate from college and begin your career, you will either supervise or be supervised. If you plan to be a supervisor, a foundational understanding of supervision provides a base on which to build additional supervisory knowledge and skills. If you don't see yourself supervising, you're still likely to be working for or with others, and being supervised in the process. Also, assuming you will work for a living and recognizing that you are likely to work in an organization, you will probably have some supervisory responsibilities. Experience shows that you can gain insight into the way your boss and fellow employees behave, and how organizations function by studying supervision. Remember, you don't have to aspire to be a supervisor to benefit from a course in supervision.

Supervisors have the unique responsibility of creating a work environment in which organizational members can do their work to the best of their ability and help them and the organization achieve their goals. Supervisors help others find meaning and fulfillment in their duties. Supervisors support, coach, and nurture followers and help them make good decisions. In addition, as a supervisor, you often have the opportunity to think creatively and use your imagination. Supervisors get to meet and work with a variety of people inside and outside their organization. Supervisors are often rewarded by receiving recognition and status in their organization and in the community, playing a role in influencing organizational outcomes, and receiving attractive compensation in the form of salaries, bonuses, and stock options. Finally, organizations need good supervisors and it is through the combined efforts of motivated and passionate people working together that organizations accomplish their goals. As a supervisor, you can be assured that your efforts, skills, and abilities are needed!

Comprehension Check 1-2

5. *True or false?* The transition from middle manager to top-level manager creates about as much anxiety as going from worker to supervisor.
6. Which one of the following is an interpersonal competency?
 - a. Specialized knowledge
 - b. Motivating others
 - c. Analyzing skills
 - d. Enhancing one's power base
7. A _____ is the ability to demonstrate a system and sequence of behavior that is functionally related to attaining a performance goal.
 - a. planning effort
 - b. political competency
 - c. skill
 - d. successful planner
8. Which one of the following items does not relate to stimulating individual and group performance?
 - a. Listening
 - b. Conducting group meetings
 - c. Interviewing
 - d. Projecting charisma

Enhancing Understanding

SUMMARY

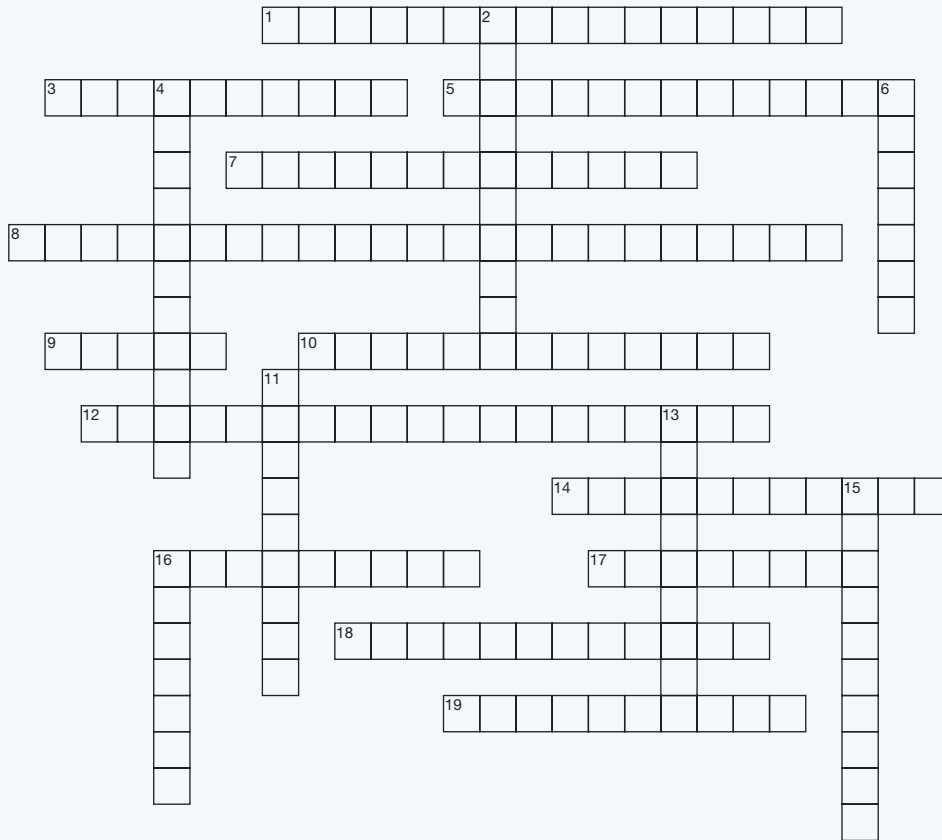
After reading this chapter, you can:

1. **Explain the difference among supervisors, middle managers, and top management.** Whereas all are part of the managerial ranks, they differ by their level in the organization. Supervisors are first-level managers—they manage operative employees. Middle managers encompass all managers from those who manage supervisors up to those in the vice-presidential ranks. Top management is composed of the highest-level managers—those responsible for establishing the organization's overall objectives and developing the policies to achieve those objectives.
2. **Define supervisor.** A supervisor is a first-level manager who oversees the work of operative or non-management employees.
3. **Identify the four functions in the management process.** Planning, organizing, leading, and controlling make up the management process. Planning involves establishing the overall strategy and setting goals. Organizing involves arranging and grouping jobs, allocating resources, and assigning work so activities can be accomplished as planned. Leading involves motivating employees, directing the activities of others, communicating properly, and resolving conflict among organizational members. Controlling involves monitoring the organization's performance and comparing it with previously set goals.
4. **Explain why the supervisor's role is considered ambiguous.** A supervisor is (1) a key person (a critical communication link in the organization); (2) a person in the middle (interacting and reconciling opposing forces and competing expectations); (3) just another worker (decision-making authority is limited, and supervisors may perform operating tasks alongside the same people they supervise); and (4) a behavioral specialist (able to listen, motivate, and lead).
5. **Describe the four essential supervisory competencies.** The four essential supervisory competencies are technical, interpersonal, conceptual, and political competence. Technical competence reflects one's ability to apply specialized knowledge or expertise. Interpersonal competence is the ability to work with, understand, and communicate with others both individually and in groups. Conceptual competence is one's mental ability to analyze and diagnose complex situations. Political competence is the ability to enhance one's power by building a power base and establishing the right connections in the organization.
6. **Identify the elements that are necessary to be successful as a supervisor.** Several elements are necessary to become a successful supervisor, including understanding that you're part of the management team, handling legitimate power properly, and recognizing differences in employees.

COMPREHENSION: Review and Discussion Questions

- 1-1. What differentiates supervisory positions from all other levels of management?
- 1-2. Is the owner-manager of a small store with three employees an operative employee, a supervisor, or a top manager? Explain.
- 1-3. What specific tasks are common to all managers, regardless of their level in the organization?
- 1-4. Contrast time spent on management functions by supervisors versus top management.
- 1-5. "The best rank-and-file employees should be promoted to supervisors." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Explain.
- 1-6. Why is conceptual competence more important for top managers than it is for first-level supervisors?
- 1-7. A supervisor is both "a key person" and "just another worker." Explain this phenomenon.

KEY CONCEPT CROSSWORD



ACROSS

1. people who manage other managers
3. competency in the ability to analyze and diagnose complex situations
5. competency in the ability to work with and communicate with others
7. people responsible for establishing an organization's overall goals
8. conceptual, interpersonal, technical, and political
9. the ability to demonstrate a behavior related to attaining a performance goal
10. doing the right task
12. planning, organizing, leading, and controlling
14. first-line managers
16. competency in the ability to enhance one's power
17. defining an organization's goals
18. the systematic grouping of people to accomplish a specific purpose
19. doing a task right

DOWN

2. the process of getting things done, effectively and efficiently through and with people
4. monitoring activities
6. motivating employees
11. competency in the ability to apply specialized knowledge or expertise
13. an employee who physically produces goods and services
15. arranging and grouping jobs
16. the primary activities supervisors perform

Developing Your Supervisory Skills

GETTING TO KNOW YOURSELF

Before you can effectively supervise others, you must understand your present strengths and areas in need of development. To assist in this learning process, we encourage you to complete self-assessments that may help determine:

- How Motivated Am I to Manage?
- What's My Basic Personality?

- What's My Jungian or Myers-Briggs 16-Type Personality?
- What's My Emotional Intelligence Score?

Finally, after you complete any self-assessment, we suggest you retain the results, and store them as part of your "portfolio of learning about yourself."

BUILDING A TEAM

1-8. An Experiential Exercise: Sharing and Receiving Information

When you begin a new course, do you have specific expectations of what you want from the class? You probably do, but how often do you communicate them to the instructor?¹⁸ This information is important to both of you. As a supervisor, you will need to become accustomed to sharing and receiving information about your expectations and the expectations of others. You can begin by defining your expectations for this course. First, take out a piece of paper and write your name at the top. Then, respond to the following questions:

- A. What do I want from this course? Why?
- B. Why are these things important to me?
- C. How does this course fit into my career plans?
- D. What is my greatest challenge in taking this class?

When you have finished answering these questions, pair up with another class member (preferably someone you do not already know) and exchange papers. Get to know each other using the information on these sheets as a starting point. Prepare an introduction of your partner, and share your partner's responses to the four questions with the class and your instructor.

MENTORING OTHERS

A mentor is someone in the organization, usually more experienced and in a higher-level position, who sponsors or supports another employee or student (frequently called a protégé). A mentor can teach, guide, and encourage the protégé as that person is socialized to the culture of the organization. Some organizations have formal mentoring programs, but even if your organization does not, mentoring is an important supervisory skill for you to develop. Increasingly, students are asked to participate in providing service to the community by mentoring K–12 students, as well as college-level peers. Check with your program or department chair to determine whether mentoring opportunities are available within your school or community.

STEPS IN PRACTICING THE SKILL

STEP 1: Communicate honestly and openly with your protégé. If your protégé is going to learn from you and benefit from your experience, you're going to have to be open and honest as you talk about what you've done. Bring up the failures as well as the successes. Remember that mentoring is a learning process, and for learning to take place, you're going to have to be open and honest in "telling it like it is."

STEP 2: Encourage honest and open communication from your protégé. You need to know as the mentor what your protégé hopes to gain from this relationship. You should encourage the protégé to ask for

¹⁸The idea for this exercise came from B. Goza, "Graffiti Needs Assessment Involving Students in the First Class Session," *Journal of Management Education* 17, no. 1 (February 1993), 99–106.

information and to be specific about what he or she wants to gain.

STEP 3: Treat the relationship with the protégé as a learning opportunity. Don't pretend to have all the answers and all the knowledge. But do share what you've learned through your experiences. And in your conversations and interactions with your protégé, you may be able to learn as much from that

person as he or she does from you. So, be open to listening to what your protégé is saying.

STEP 4: Take the time to get to know your protégé. As a mentor, you should be willing to take the time to get to know your protégé and his or her interests. If you're not willing to spend extra time, you should probably not embark on a mentoring relationship.

COMMUNICATING EFFECTIVELY

- 1-9. Develop a three to four-page response to the following question: Are supervisors in a no-win situation in an organization? Present both sides of the

argument and include supporting data. Conclude your discussion by defending and supporting one of the two arguments you've presented.

THINKING CRITICALLY

► Case 1-A: Transition to Supervisor

Tristan came in on the ground floor in his company and had excelled in his position for several years when he was promoted to a supervisory position. He was excited about the increased responsibility and money, and he also enjoyed the status and respect that came with the new title.

Tristan's position was to supervise a new production department at a new plant site of his small regional company. In preparation, he was ordered to attend a two-week supervisor's training program at headquarters. As he expected, the training was focused on human resources (HR) concerns, customer satisfaction issues, and corporate quality production expectations. Because the new location was intended to showcase the company's strength in quality manufacturing, he was allowed to recruit his own team from among the company's statewide employee pool. Several seasoned workers, acquainted with him as a result of his time with the company, expressed interest in the startup department.

Lauren was hired as the departmental administrative assistant and William was hired as the new line foreman. Tristan was elated and felt that things were moving ahead quickly enough for his superiors to be pleased with the progress he was making. He continued to fill the necessary positions. Within a month, the department was ready to get going. Everyone was excited, attitudes were positive, and he was looking forward to the inaugural production run.

Tristan had never held a supervisory position before, yet he knew Lauren and William were both strong employees with great work ethics. He was certain everyone he selected possessed a similar work ethic and was driven to

succeed. However, this was quickly proven erroneous, and when it became obvious the hoped-for production quality was nonexistent, everything became a dismal failure all at once. The department failed to produce at the expected quality level, and turmoil among the employees was widespread. During the nearly two years he was supervisor, Tristan was never able to earn the respect of his employees or experience the success in production quality envisioned by the company.

In reality, many first-time supervisors earn their position by simply doing well at their job; however, without proper training, in both supervision and leadership, disappointing outcomes like Tristan's are more common than you would imagine. Just because an employee is good, or even great, it does not mean he or she will be a great supervisor.

RESPONDING TO THE CASE

- 1-10. If you envision transitioning into a supervisory position, what can you do to ensure you don't end up like Tristan?
- 1-11. What supervisory competencies should you work to develop? Why?
- 1-12. With which of the four management functions do you believe most supervisors need help? Why do you think this is the case?
- 1-13. The role of supervisor can be considered a first step toward management. What are the benefits and potential disadvantages of pursuing a management career?

► Case 1-B: Build a Better Boss

Dave couldn't have been more excited. Working for Google, he knew they didn't do anything halfway. So, when he had the opportunity to be part of a new supervisor training project intended to "build a better boss," he couldn't wait to get started. During the training to understand what a great boss is and does, Google trainers helped Dave and his fellow supervisors compare their appraisal data to performance reviews, feedback surveys, and supporting papers turned in for individuals rated as top-supervisors. They soon found out the training materials were developed from Google's Project Oxygen, which identified eight characteristics or habits of Google's most effective supervisors.

The "big eight" characteristics listed for Dave and the others were:

1. Provide an unambiguous vision of the future
2. Help individuals to reach their long-term work goals
3. Express interest in employees' well-being
4. Ensure you have the necessary technical abilities to support employee efforts
5. Display effective communication skills, especially listening
6. Provide coaching support when needed
7. Focus on being productive and on end results
8. Avoid over-managing; let your team be responsible

Initially, Dave and the others were underwhelmed and thought these eight attributes seemed pretty simplistic and obvious. In fact, Dave wondered why Google spent all this time and effort to uncover these at all. He later learned that even Google's vice-president for people operations, Laszlo Bock, said, "My first reaction was, that's it?"

However, as Dave and the other supervisors continued to work through the training, they began to realize there was more to this list than met the eye. The next step in training was for them to look closer and see how Google ranked the eight items by importance. As they did, so did the results of Project Oxygen become surprising and much more interesting! As supervisors, Dave and the others knew that Google's approach to management since being founded in 1999 was for them to leave people alone and let them do their stuff. If workers got stuck, Google believed they would ask their bosses, whose deep technical expertise propelled them to supervision in the first place. It wasn't hard for Dave and the others to see that Google wanted its supervisors to be outstanding technical specialists. The surprise for Dave was that previously, in the Google context, they were always reminded that to be a supervisor, particularly on the engineering side, they needed to be as deep or deeper a technical expert than the people who worked for them. Now, Project Oxygen turned that idea upside down as Google revealed that the

importance of technical expertise was ranked number eight (very last) on the list.

Here is the complete list provided to Dave and his fellow supervisors, ranked from most important to least important, along with what each characteristic entails:

- Provide coaching support when needed. (Provide specific feedback and have regular one-on-one meetings with employees; offer solutions tailored to each employee's strengths.)
- Avoid over-managing; let your team be responsible. (Give employees space to tackle problems themselves, but be available to offer advice.)
- Express interest in employees' well-being. (Make new team members feel welcome and get to know your employees as people.)
- Focus on being productive and on end results (Focus on helping the team achieve its goals by prioritizing work and getting rid of obstacles.)
- Display good communication skills, especially listening. (Learn to listen and to share information; encourage open dialogue and pay attention to the team's concerns.)
- Help individuals to reach their long-term work goals (Notice employees' efforts so they can see how their hard work is furthering their careers; appreciate employees' efforts and make that appreciation known.)
- Provide an unambiguous vision of the future. (Lead the team but keep everyone involved in developing and working toward the team's vision.)
- Ensure you have the necessary technical abilities to support employee efforts. (Understand the challenges facing the team and be able to help team members solve problems.)

Now, Dave and the other supervisors at Google aren't just encouraged to be great supervisors; they know what Google expects them to do to be great supervisors. The company continues to do its part with ongoing supervisory training, as well as individual coaching and performance review sessions for Dave and the others. Google believes Project Oxygen breathed new life into their supervisors, and Vice-President Bock says the company's efforts paid off quickly, allowing them to see a statistically significant improvement in quality for 75 percent of their worst-performing supervisors.

Sources: Based on R. D'Aprix, "A Simple Effective Formula for Leadership," *Strategic Communication Management*, May 2011, p. 14; R. Jaish, "Pieces of Eight," *e-learning Age*, May 2011, p. 6; M. L. Stallard, "Google's Project Oxygen: A Case-Study in Connection Culture," www.humanresourcesiq.com, March 25, 2011; J. Aquino, "8 Traits of Stellar Managers, Defined by Googlers," www.businessinsider.com, March 15, 2011; and A. Bryant, "Google's Quest to Build a Better Boss," *New York Times Online*, March 12, 2011.