

Effective Supervisory Practices Fifth Edition

Edited by Michelle Poché Flaherty



ICMA PRESS



Effective Supervisory Practices Fifth Edition

Better Results Through Teamwork

Edited by
Michelle Poché Flaherty



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Effective Supervisory Practices Fifth Edition

Better Results Through Teamwork

Edited by

Michelle Poché Flaherty

Director of Performance, Strategy, and Innovation for the Architect of the Capitol,
Washington, D.C., and formerly Manager of Organizational Development,
city of Rockville, Maryland

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ABOUT THE EDITOR

Michelle Poché Flaherty served as the organizational development manager for the city of Rockville, Maryland, from 2006 to 2012. She was responsible for change management, leadership development, and performance improvement. She is also president and founder of City on a Hill Consulting, providing leadership development and executive coaching to elected officials and chief executives from all levels of government. Currently Flaherty holds the position of director of performance, strategy, and innovation for the Architect of the Capitol, in Washington, D.C.

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Flaherty graduated with honors from the University of California at Santa Barbara and is a professionally trained coach. She has served on the California Coastal Commission and the Board of Examiners for the U.S. Baldrige Performance Excellence Program. Her leadership workshops are frequently featured at national conferences for ICMA and the National League of Cities.

PREFACE

Effective Supervisory Practices: Better Results Through Teamwork, Fifth Edition, is designed for local government supervisors—new or experienced—from the front line to the most senior managers. The leadership strategies explored throughout the book will benefit department directors and public administration executives as much as new or aspiring supervisors for whom a foundation of basics is introduced.

In addition to offering pragmatic recommendations about the day-to-day duties of a supervisor—such things as scheduling employees, managing projects, and maintaining employee records, this book offers guidance for addressing the more complex challenges all managers confront as they seek to effectively communicate, motivate, and model ethical decisions and lead a team.

Effective Supervisory Practices is informed by well-established best practices and the most current thinking from the field of business leadership. These concepts are presented within the unique environment of local government, where customer service is often related to enforcement of regulations and every team's work plan should align with community vision, character, and culture. Individually, each chapter is a reliable resource for a particular topic; taken as a whole, the book's recurring themes reinforce the greater benefits of transparency, integrity, leveraging diversity, and team empowerment with the goal of strengthening each reader's leadership instincts and effectiveness.

Changes from the previous edition include the addition of a chapter on harassment prevention and the inclusion of workplace security issues and employee wellness with the discussion of workplace safety. Three previous chapters specific to performance evaluation, grievances, and coaching/counseling/mentoring have been integrated into two chapters focused on accountability and performance evaluation. Strategic planning is more thoroughly explored in Chapter 4 and is aligned with goal setting for individuals as presented in the evaluating performance discussion of Chapter 11. The topic of ethics has been moved toward the front of the book as a foundational subject. Most chapters have been significantly revised for this fifth edition of *Effective Supervisory Practices*.



How to put this publication to good use


This book and its accompanying study guide, *Effective Supervisory Skill Building*, may be used in a variety of ways to support the range of organizational resources available in small towns or large cities and counties. Taken together, the book and study guide provide an effective curriculum for an internal training course, convenient resource for a book club, or self-guided development program and reference tool for an individual leader.

Training Program If your organization has a training professional on staff, or funding for consultant support, *Effective Supervisory Practices* serves as a convenient training textbook designed specifically for local government supervisors. The study guide provides the instructor and students alike with a full program of study, complete with exercises and an action plan for future learning and professional development, including an action strategies worksheet.

Book Club For organizations with limited resources, one of the simplest ways to deploy *Effective Supervisory Practices* to your supervisors quickly and economically is to form a book club. Consider assigning the chapters to senior managers who will take turns leading chapter discussions with supervisors from other departments as well as their own. Each chapter concludes with two or three case studies to support a group discussion. More ambitious discussion leaders will find additional ideas for exercises or supplemental information in the study guide. The book club format provides senior leaders with refresher training to strengthen their leadership habits and align their current management practices with the guidance introduced to employees in the text.

Self-Guided Development Absent a training program, *Effective Supervisory Practices* is a valuable resource for local government supervisors. Any employee reading the book on his or her own will find helpful guidance for management and leadership responsibilities in every chapter. The study guide offers optional “homework” to reinforce the learning in the primary text.

Reference Book Every local government supervisor should consider retaining a copy of *Effective Supervisory Practices* on his or her shelf to consult on an ongoing basis. Each chapter opens with a snapshot and closes with a checklist to allow a



quick scan for helpful tips when confronted with the management challenges that arise with day-to-day supervision. In addition, the list of recommended resources at the back of the book provides the titles of leading articles and books with more information to support the topic of each chapter, as well as related websites with helpful information.

Thank you to the team of contributors

Special thanks are extended to the extraordinary authors who contributed revised chapters, and in some instances entirely new chapters, for the fifth edition of *Effective Supervisory Practices*. You'll find the contributors list at the end of the book, with a brief biography of each author and a link to their respective websites.

From ICMA Press I'd like to thank former Acquisitions Editor Jessica Kemp, who launched the project and helped shape its vision; former Creative Services Director Valerie Hepler and senior graphic designer Charles Mountain, who reshaped and modernized the look and feel of the book; Executive Assistant Nedra James and Copy Editor Janelle Julien, who provided ongoing support; and Publications Director Ann Mahoney, who managed the project and made the fifth edition possible. Graphic artist Gloria Marconi brought concepts to life through illustrations. Christine Becker, President, Christine Becker Associates, was particularly instrumental as the substantive editor of this edition and lead author of the accompanying study guide.

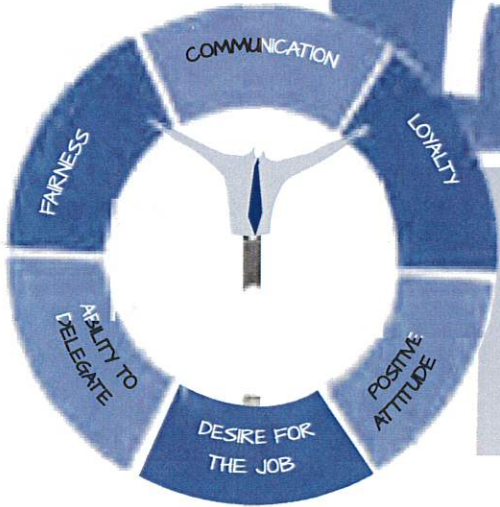
Discovering your potential

Effective Supervisory Practices was designed to serve not only as an effective reference tool and development guide but also as a source of support and inspiration. Every supervisor is faced with complex challenges that only human beings can present, and every supervisor has the capacity to be a great leader. The information and guidance provided in this text is dedicated to cultivating the potential of all readers to achieve great success with and through the teams they lead.

Michelle Poché Flaherty

LEADERSHIP SKILLS
MANAGEMENT SKILLS

SUGGESTIONS



WELLS FARGO

ROLES OF A SUPERVISOR

Laura H. Chalkley

Excellence is not an accomplishment.
It is a spirit, a never-ending process.

**Lawrence M. Miller, author and
leadership and management consultant**

1



SNAPSHOT

This chapter provides a broad overview of the role of a supervisor in today's environment. Chapter objectives are to

- Introduce key challenges that today's public sector supervisors face
- Highlight major supervisory practices that provide a framework for understanding your roles as a supervisor
- Set the stage for the detailed information on effective supervisory practices that this book covers.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What are the major responsibilities of a supervisor?
- What is the difference between leading and managing?
- For new supervisors, how do you move from peer to leader?
- How can you become an effective delegator?
- What are the characteristics of a successful supervisor?

The role of today's supervisor involves much more than getting the work of your unit done with and through your immediate team. As a supervisor, you are

- A *vital link* between the organization's vision and the day-to-day activities that contribute to making that vision a reality
- The *connection* between the leaders who establish strategic goals for the organization and the "boots on the ground" who implement those goals
- The *glue* that holds your team and your projects together, so that the work keeps moving regardless of political changes, tight budgets, changing priorities, staff reductions, and new demands from citizens.

Author Laura Chalkley appreciatively recognizes the contribution of Scot Wrighton, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

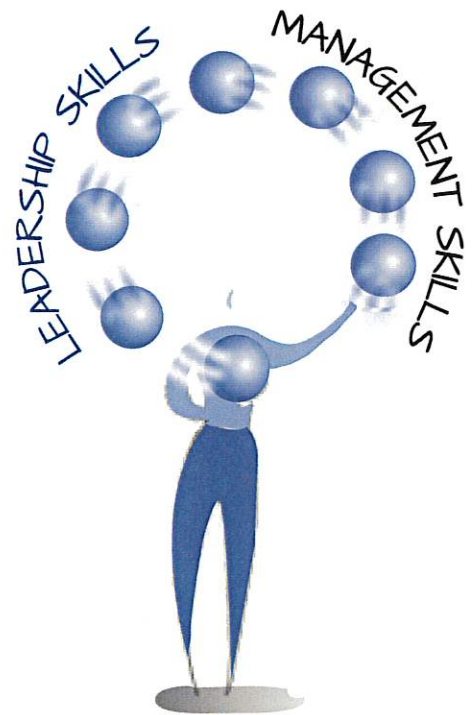
It is a tough and demanding job that requires a blend of technical, management, and people skills to achieve agreed-upon outcomes. Whether you are a veteran supervisor or fairly new to the job, you must leverage the expertise that helped you get the promotion in the first place while developing and refining new skills to get work done with and through a high-performing team.

Among the challenges that today's public sector supervisors face are

- A growing workload with shrinking resources
- Frequently changing priorities and needs
- A diverse and multicultural workforce that creates new dynamics and leadership responsibilities
- High expectations from citizens seeking the best return on their tax dollars.

This book provides a roadmap to guide you through the twists and turns of being an effective supervisor. It focuses on the broad dimensions of your job and the skills you will need to be successful. Your supervisory responsibilities include

- Ensuring your team produces high-quality work and delivers exceptional customer service
- Leading, developing, supporting, coaching, and motivating your team
- Holding team members accountable for both outcomes and behavior
- Being a constant and consistent model of ethical, responsible, and respectful behavior
- Communicating regularly both inside and outside the organization
- Setting the direction for your work unit and for individual team members to carry out the organization's mission, vision, and strategic goals
- Managing workloads—both your own and those of your team—to deliver on-time and on-budget outcomes



SELF-ASSESSMENT QUESTIONS


Think about these questions as you prepare to embark on the process to become a more effective supervisor:

1. What are your leadership and management strengths?
2. What areas of your leadership and management capacity do you think need further development?
3. How do your unit's mission, vision, and values connect to the organization's mission, vision, and values?
4. Do your team members understand clearly the organization's goals, the unit's goals, and their individual goals?
5. How do you support your team?
6. Do you include other teams in decision-making processes? How?
7. What is the biggest challenge you face right now as a supervisor?

- Creating and sustaining a safe, secure, healthy, and respectful organization
- Managing change and being ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

Your roles and tasks as a supervisor will vary greatly depending on the culture and climate of your organization, the functions for which you are responsible, the degree of autonomy you are granted, and your awareness of your strengths and areas needing development. The following supervisory practices are keys to your success:

- Understanding the difference between leading and managing
- Moving from being a peer to being a supervisor
- Building and sustaining a team
- Involving employees in decision making
- Delegating effectively
- Identifying and resolving problems
- Making jobs more interesting and rewarding
- Building relationships.



These skills and competencies will give you a firm foundation for meeting the challenges of your job. Later chapters provide more detailed information on how to put these essential skills to work.

Understanding the difference between leading and managing

Leading focuses on establishing direction, aligning employees based on the direction, and motivating and inspiring employees to succeed. Leading produces change, with an emphasis on achieving long-term outcomes. *Managing* focuses on short-term results. Managing involves planning and budgeting, organizing and staffing, and control and problem-solving functions.¹

Management keeps things running—that is, the day-to-day operations of an organization—and leadership looks to the future. Effective supervisors use both leadership and management skills.

In many organizations, the management responsibilities of supervisors are communicated by senior managers or through established processes. For example, all supervisors in your organization may be required to submit budget information by a certain deadline or use a specific form or system for keeping track of employee work schedules and time off.

Your leadership responsibilities are sometimes less obvious. Often, it is only when challenges arise that supervisors begin—out of necessity—to develop the leadership skills required to overcome those challenges. For example, small disagreements in a work group can grow into large interpersonal conflicts that may interfere with getting the work done. The immediate challenge may make it clear that you need to improve teamwork in your group for the sake of long-term effectiveness.

The intent of this book is to help you become the kind of leader who will build teamwork from the outset, so that conflicts are less likely to arise. Helping you develop leadership skills in communicating, team building, motivating employees, and inspiring continuous improvement are all part of the chapters that follow. You'll also learn more about the practical management skills and techniques for organizing, monitoring, and evaluating the work of your team.

When you develop your leadership skills along with your management skills, you become a leader, not a boss. This is a key distinction for supervisors of high-performing teams.

Moving from being a peer to being a supervisor

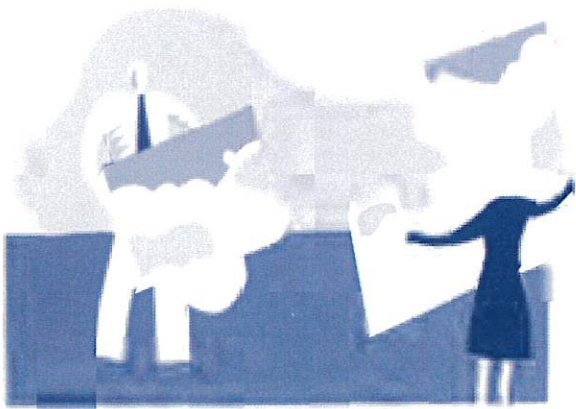
One of the toughest professional challenges you'll face if you are a new supervisor is becoming a boss to your former co-workers and friends. In the past, you may have commiserated occasionally with your peers about organizational changes or decisions. Now, your leadership responsibilities include making or explaining decisions, even when they are unpopular. While it is okay to disagree in private with your manager, once a decision is made you must support it. That means not saying, "Oh, well, senior management made the decision so I have no other choice but to implement it." Instead, if your employees raise concerns, you should listen carefully and support the decision, saying "I understand your feelings, but this decision has been made based on certain facts, and we need to support it." You will likely find your employees respect you more, not less, as a result of this kind of leadership.

If you were part of the team before becoming the supervisor and have close relationships within the group, you need to be open about how those relationships have changed. It can be difficult to separate friendship from work, and you need to be self-conscious about how you manage those relationships. For example, if you went to lunch every week with a colleague that you now supervise, continuing those regular lunches could be viewed as favoritism by other team members.

Becoming a successful supervisor requires making changes in your operating style to adapt to your new role and responsibilities. That includes

- Rethinking your relationships with work *friends* who are now your *subordinates*
- Letting go of the tasks you used to do and trusting your team to get those tasks done
- Keeping an eye on the big picture and longer-term goals.

You don't necessarily need to change your entire circle of friends. You do need to make sure personal friendships don't interfere with your supervisory responsibilities, which include the possibility of disciplining a good friend someday.



STEPS FOR MAKING A SMOOTH TRANSITION FROM PEER TO SUPERVISOR

1. Meet with your entire team soon after promotion.
2. Meet individually with each employee to discuss any concerns.
3. Ask how you can best support your employees during this transition.
4. Communicate clearly how much you respect the team members and look forward to working with each one as the team supervisor.
5. Take your time—and give your employees time—to grow accustomed to new roles.
6. Be consistent in how you deal with your team in your new role.

Building and sustaining a team

A team that reaches a high level of functioning is a group of people who respect and trust each other and know that they can rely on each other. When it comes to getting the job done, team members share the same goals, attitudes, and values. Team spirit grows out of a sense of pride and belonging. But a team must be built—and, once built, it must be maintained. The more effective you are in leading your team, the more successful you and your group will be in meeting unit and individual goals.


Leading a team can be a very rewarding experience, especially when you focus on building the skills needed to empower the team. With empowerment comes accountability. That means defining measures for team performance. Successful team leaders discuss what accountability and empowerment mean and then guide their teams through the work with a clear understanding of expected results.

Involving employees in decision making

Accomplishing work with and through other people requires engaging those people in decisions that contribute to team effectiveness. You should rely on your employees for their expertise and their ideas on how to get the job done effectively and efficiently. When employees are involved in making decisions, they are more likely to embrace those decisions and be committed to implementing them.

Effective supervisors encourage team members to participate in many decisions, including planning, goal setting, scheduling, and allocating resources. However, you





are ultimately responsible for making decisions and for ensuring that your employees have the skills needed to make informed decisions.

Delegating effectively

A supervisor who delegates authority and accepts employees' decisions about how best to do their jobs is the leader of a team, rather than the boss of a work group. Delegating is essential to your supervisory success because it

- Helps employees feel valued
- Encourages creative and innovative problem solving
- Motivates employees to take full responsibility for their work
- Increases productivity and ensures that the work gets done
- Helps you manage your supervisory workload.

Delegation can improve performance by requiring the mastery of new skills by your employees. Some supervisors are reluctant to delegate, either because they are afraid that the person might make a mistake or because they are unwilling to let go of

ARE YOU AN EFFECTIVE DELEGATOR?

Test your delegation skills by answering *true* or *false* to the following statements:

1. It's easier if I just do it myself because it takes too long to explain to someone else how to do it.
2. I know how to get this task done better than anyone else.
3. If I delegate the task, that person will get credit, and my manager may think my employee is more qualified than I am.
4. My employees will think I'm lazy.
5. It's really my work so I shouldn't delegate it and make my boss mad.

If you answered *true* to one or more of these statements, think about your supervisory responsibilities to develop staff and get the work done through other people. Are you behaving like a supervisor if you are reluctant to delegate?

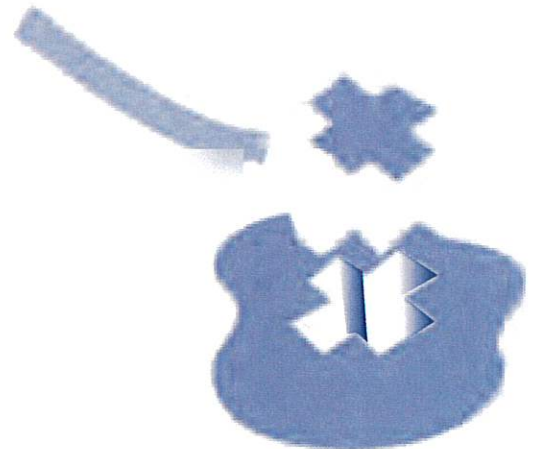
work they see as their own. To be an effective supervisor, you must focus on helping employees to reach their full potential—even if that means encouraging team members to become more skilled in some areas than you are.

There are four parts to successful delegation: *responsibility*, *authority*, *instruction*, and *accountability*.

- **Responsibility** You should give the employee full responsibility for the specific task you are delegating and clear goals to help him or her complete the task. However, even when you delegate responsibility for the task, you remain responsible for making sure the work is completed as required.
- **Authority** The employee must have sufficient authority to complete the task, and other team members should know that the employee has that authority. Giving responsibility without authority undermines the effective completion of work.
- **Instruction** To be successful, your employee needs specific instructions on the expectations and work processes and regular feedback to ensure successful completion. As part of the instruction process, you should welcome suggestions on new or more efficient ways of completing the task that might be different from how you would have done it.
- **Accountability** Finally, the team member must be held accountable for completing the task and achieving the desired outcome. Delegation gives employees a chance to learn new skills and improve their performance. This will not happen if there is no accountability for completing the task.

The following guidelines will help increase the effectiveness of your delegation:

- Be clear about what you want done. Communicate the goal, the deadline, and any rules and procedures. Be sure that the employee understands the instructions.
- Choose the right person for the right task. Remember that what you delegate is supposed to be challenging but not impossible.





- Give the team member time and space to complete the assignment. Don't hover, but make yourself available for course corrections along the way.
- Maintain open communication and check on progress, but do not try to rescue the person. Delegating work to your employees doesn't mean doing it for them.
- Hold team members accountable for their assigned tasks, and give them the necessary authority to complete them.
- Recognize the person's accomplishments.²

Successful delegation requires you to be creative and clear and to trust your employees. What they accomplish may astound you.


Identifying and resolving problems

Being able to identify and resolve problems that may interfere with successful achievement of unit goals is an essential supervisory skill. Your success as a problem solver requires that you be

- **Approachable** so that employees and colleagues are willing to talk to you when they need help or are facing unexpected obstacles
- **Connected** to work progress so that you can constantly evaluate successes, concerns, and potential risks within the context of your team's mission, goals, and outcomes
- **Alert** to potential issues and risks so that you can coach employees through bumps before they grow into serious problems
- **Open** to changes in work processes or strategies so that you can manage challenges
- **Aware** of trends or patterns that may indicate a potential problem.

Making jobs more interesting and rewarding

Effective supervisors are willing to redesign jobs to make them more interesting and challenging. Although it is often assumed that what workers want most from their jobs is more money, studies have shown that employees also want more control over their work.³



Factors that make jobs more interesting and lead to employee satisfaction include

- Opportunities to develop in visible and desirable ways, including taking on more responsibility and new challenges
- A strong fit that matches job responsibilities with the employee's strongest skills and personal interests
- Job variety that keeps employees interested in their work and makes them feel important
- The opportunity to work independently with minimal supervision
- Access to the latest technology—both to increase job productivity and to develop new skills
- A healthy work-life balance, including flexible work schedules whenever possible.⁴

Putting time and effort into enriching or redesigning employees' jobs and helping employees balance life goals with job expectations is likely to be rewarded with higher morale, increased productivity, better work quality, lower turnover, and less absenteeism.

Many local governments offer alternative work schedules—telecommuting, flexible hours, and compressed work weeks—to meet the diverse needs of employees. You should be aware of these opportunities and support employee preferences when they can be accommodated without reducing productivity.

Building relationships

Building a broad base of support among key stakeholders to achieve desired outcomes and working collaboratively within and across organizational boundaries enables you to better support your employees and achieve division goals. While it can seem daunting to try to connect all interested parties to your work, building relationships is an important part of your supervisory job. Incorporate relationship building into your daily work. In the long run, investing in relationships both inside and outside the organization will usually produce better outcomes.

For example, when you are responsible for implementing a new process, you might pull together a group of internal staff from other affected departments to discuss options and approaches. Depending on the scope of the process and your



authority, you also might reach out to a sample of citizens to seek their ideas. Getting input before something is implemented can save time, money, and frustration.

Broaden your reach and build strong, productive relationships with these strategies and opportunities:

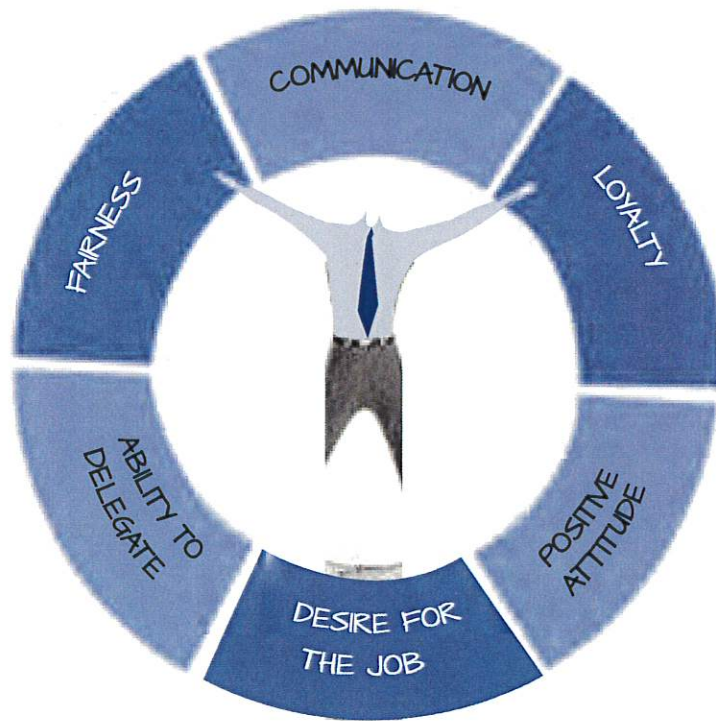
- Listen closely to informal comments from supervisors from other departments who offer suggestions on how to improve a work process based on their experience.
- Keep an open-door policy for your staff so that they feel comfortable suggesting new ways of delivering services.
- Follow-up with people you meet in other settings who make interesting presentations at meetings, offer innovative ideas, or seem interested in or knowledgeable about areas that are similar to your responsibilities.
- Get to know supervisors in surrounding jurisdictions who oversee similar service areas so that you can compare notes and share ideas.



Today's supervisor handles a wide range of management responsibilities, including representing your team to senior management, to other departments with whom you may share resources, and to outside groups and individuals whose participation in the work of the local government is essential for success.

Consequently, you often function as a *broker* who must balance competing interests to achieve broad goals. To be an effective broker, you must

- Stay in touch with the needs and views of your work unit
- Maintain a steady focus on defined goals
- Be familiar with important external resources who may influence outcomes
- Model working across department lines and with outside organizations to achieve team success.



Adapted with permission from Samuel C. Certo, *Supervision: Concepts and Skill-Building*, 7th ed. (New York: McGraw-Hill, 2010, 17). ©2010 McGraw-Hill Companies, Inc.

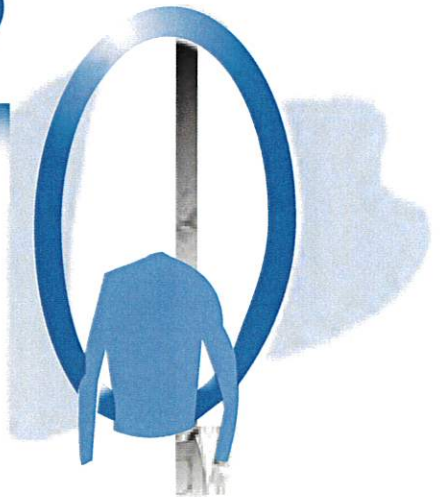
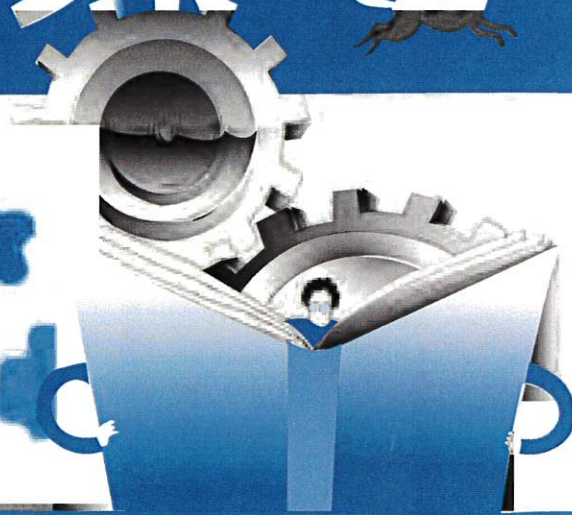


Summary

Effective supervision requires you to be clear about work expectations and to have a strong understanding of what it takes to be successful in managing a diverse work team. It also depends on constructive, positive, and continuous interaction with your employees. Continuous, two-way communication makes it easier for you to identify roadblocks that may interfere with achieving the work unit's objectives, provides opportunities for coaching, makes better use of resources, quickly mediates conflict, and allows for changes in course direction if necessary. Helping employees grow and develop professionally by taking the time to listen, observe, and coach them is key to your shared success. It can be one of the most rewarding aspects of supervision.

Even more than that, effective supervision

- Ensures public confidence in the government by demonstrating and fostering the highest ethical standards in personal conduct and in the work environment
- Stretches and ultimately eliminates boundaries that limit creativity and risk taking to produce better results
- Models and fosters the courage to do the right thing.



SUPERVISORY LEADERSHIP

Laura H. Chalkley

If your actions inspire others to dream more,
learn more, do more, and become more,
you are a leader.

John Quincy Adams, sixth president of the United States

2



SNAPSHOT

This chapter examines leadership—what it is, why it matters, and how to become an effective leader. Chapter objectives are to

- Provide a perspective on leadership that is based on mission and values
- Offer practical advice to help supervisors become more successful leaders
- Stress the importance of continuing professional development to deepen leadership capacity.

The chapter will help you answer these questions:

- What is leadership?
- What are the primary sources of a leader's influence?
- What are the characteristics of influential supervisory leadership?
- How can supervisors develop and improve their leadership skills?

Leadership is a constant area of research, discussion, scrutiny, and attention. Are leaders born? Can leadership skills be taught? What are the essential competencies for all leaders? Authors have long been in search of excellence, greatness, and reinvention, and have produced volumes to document their findings. Perhaps the most important results of this constant quest for answers about leadership are that there are no clear answers, no universal competencies, and no best way to be an effective leader.

What is leadership?

Many of today's supervisors began their careers in organizations where power and authority flowed from position. But as organizational theorist Peter Senge observes, "...those in positions of authority are not the source of authority."¹ At a practical level, this means that the power of position is not required to exert influence in the organization. Leaders emerge at all levels of the organization.

Author Laura Chalkley appreciatively recognizes the contributions of James Stephens, who wrote the version of this chapter included in the previous edition.

The real source of authority is the legitimacy of the guiding principles by which the organization lives. Supervisors and other emerging leaders cannot lead effectively without a deep understanding of the mission of the organization. In local government, genuine authority flows from the principle of public service. Leadership expert Frances Hesselbein has observed that “people want to be a part of something that makes a difference, that transcends the ordinary: they want a star to steer by.”² That’s why it is essential for leaders to communicate and advocate for a vision that inspires the efforts of those they lead.

Robert Rosen in his book *Leading People* defines new leadership this way: “First off, it is not a status....Leaders inspire rather than intimidate, motivate rather than monitor, mobilize rather than manage. And these activities don’t require the totems of rank and position. Rather than a status, leadership is an activity...it *does* something. It enables a group of people to pursue a shared vision and create extraordinary results.”³

From a practical perspective, leadership is a partnership that requires shared commitment and consent from those who choose to follow the leader. Consent comes through the development of respect, trust, and commitment. It occurs in the context of formal and informal relationships in all types and sizes of organizations.



LEADERSHIP COMPETENCIES

- Provides continuous, constructive feedback and coaching
- Mentors, recognizes, and rewards staff
- Develops highly effective relationships with customers
- Fosters a climate of openness, dialogue, and creative problem solving
- Models self-motivation and pursues opportunities to master new knowledge
- Stands up for the right, though unpopular, decision
- Demonstrates and models a high level of commitment to public service
- Expertly fosters a climate of innovation and creativity.

Source: Department of Human Resources, Arlington County, Virginia (2006)

Situational leadership, as originally developed by Ken Blanchard, suggests that there is no best style of leadership, and that successful leaders adapt their style to the situation at hand. While it is important to focus on consistency and equity when dealing with your employees, it is equally important to recognize and build on your employees' unique strengths to help them thrive and succeed.⁴


Sources of influence

As a supervisor, you have three primary sources of influence: role, reputation, and behavior.

Role

The power and authority that comes with your role as a supervisor provides one source of influence. By virtue of your position, you are in charge of both specific outcomes and the people who report to you to achieve those outcomes. However, the more you rely on the power of role to influence people and get the job done, the less successful you may be as a leader.

Leaders who use power to intimidate their employees rarely achieve the highest levels of productivity. For example, when you draw primarily on your authority as the boss to get the job done, employees may feel that you are constantly looking



over their shoulders. As a result, little work may get done unless you are constantly hovering over employees. At that point, you are coercing more than leading, and employee motivation is reduced in the long term.

Effective leaders do not rely solely on the authority vested in their role or title.

Reputation

Your reputation as a supervisor is your second major source of influence. Reputation is the story that peers, subordinates, and others tell about you. Comments like “she’s always looking out for her employees,” rather than “you can’t trust her,” say something about you as a leader. Over time, these statements create an image that either adds to or detracts from your ability to exert positive influence. The good news is that a reputation can be changed because you control the most important aspect of the story—your behavior as a supervisor.

Effective leaders earn a positive reputation by building trust with those they lead.

POCKETS OF GREATNESS

In his monograph *Good to Great and the Social Sectors*, Jim Collins talks about maximizing performance by matching people, skills, and organizational needs. That process can be challenging in local governments where civil service requirements may reduce or limit flexibility and where performance issues may have been neglected for years. Collins suggests that leaders can build pockets of greatness throughout the organization by getting

- The right people on the bus
- The wrong people off the bus
- The right people into the right seats.

By taking the time to assess employees’ skills, provide constructive feedback, coach, and identify strengths, you can get the right people in the right seats and begin to build pockets of greatness one step at a time. The bigger challenge in this process is having the difficult conversations about performance and/or behavioral issues. Getting the wrong people off the bus requires constructive feedback and coaching in addition to documenting issues and conversations.

Adapted from Jim Collins, *Good to Great and the Social Sector: A Monograph to Accompany Good to Great* (Boulder, Colo.: Jim Collins, 2005), 14.



Behavior

Regardless of role and reputation, direct interaction with your employees will have a powerful effect on their view of you. While a position gives you the authority to get the job done, your behavior earns the respect of colleagues. You've probably met people who had particular reputations or occupied significant roles, only to find in person that they were very different than their reputations or roles would have predicted.

The key to influential leadership is in your behavior as a leader.

Behavior, not traits

The myth of the natural-born leader is based on the assumption that certain traits will make an individual a successful leader. This is rarely the case. Many studies have shown that behavior is a better predictor of effective leadership than personal traits.

Knowing that a person is intelligent and charismatic does not give you a reliable indicator of leadership skill. Better predictors of leadership success are specific behaviors such as

- Making sure the work group has reliable information to achieve its goals
- Treating subordinates as equals
- Allowing, encouraging, and seeking employee input
- Giving employees control over their own work
- Frequently giving credit for a job well done.

When leadership is defined as behaviors rather than traits, it becomes clear that you can learn to do what it takes to become a successful leader. Leadership is not contained in a gene any more, or any less, than other abilities.

Improving your leadership capacity

Learning to do what it takes to be an effective leader requires ongoing training to increase both your knowledge and skills. Effective leadership training begins on the front end of your supervisory role and should continue over the course of your career. Knowing yourself and how you respond to situations and behave is a critical first step in leadership development.

Leadership practices

The following practices will help you improve your leadership capacity and further enhance your skills as a successful leader.

THE FIVE PRACTICES AND TEN COMMITMENTS OF EXEMPLARY LEADERSHIP

1. **MODEL** the Way

1. **CLARIFY VALUES** by finding your voice and affirming shared ideals.

2. **SET THE EXAMPLE** by aligning actions with shared values.

2. **INSPIRE** a Shared Vision

3. **ENVISION THE FUTURE** by imagining exciting and ennobling possibilities

4. **ENLIST OTHERS** in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.

3. **CHALLENGE** the Process

5. **SEARCH FOR OPPORTUNITIES** by seizing the initiative and by looking outward for innovative ways to improve.

6. **EXPERIMENT AND TAKE RISKS** by constantly generating small wins and learning from experience.

4. **ENABLE** Others to Act

7. **FOSTER COLLABORATION** by building trust and facilitating relationships.

8. **STRENGTHEN OTHERS** by increasing self-determination and developing competence.

5. **ENCOURAGE** the Heart

9. **RECOGNIZE CONTRIBUTIONS** by showing appreciation for individual excellence.

10. **CELEBRATE THE VALUES AND VICTORIES** by creating a spirit of community.

Adapted with permission from James M. Kouzes and Barry Z. Posner, *The Leadership Challenge, Fourth Edition* (Hoboken, N.J.: John Wiley & Sons, 2007), 15. ©Wiley & Sons.

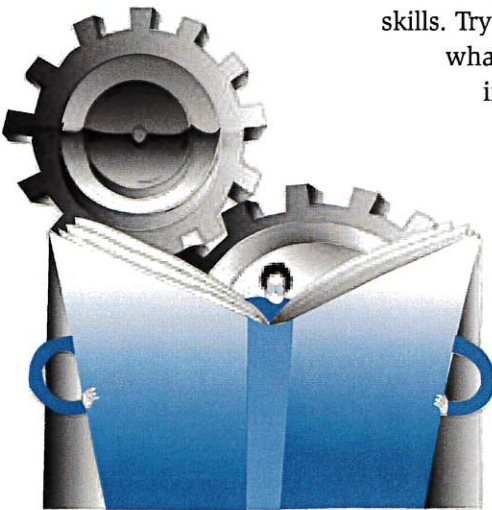
SUPERVISORY TIP: MAXIMIZE TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Take every opportunity to participate in leadership training events, especially those that offer opportunities for self-assessment, including learning about your personality type. Continually work on improving your leadership skills by learning about new ideas, concepts, and techniques. Above all, believe in your own ability to grow and develop as a leader regardless of your age or experience. Many local governments now provide leadership development training internally as well as opportunities for external development programs.

Develop a strong commitment to public service ethics Having the courage of your convictions is vital to your effectiveness and credibility as a leader. As a local government leader, you are a steward of the public trust and public funds; this makes your ethical convictions and confidence even more important. Being confident about what is right in the face of adversity takes tremendous courage.

Find worthy models and mentors Individuals in your work life who personify successful leadership can become valuable mentors as you develop your leadership skills. Try to identify what makes your chosen mentors successful leaders and what you admire or respect about their approach to leadership. If possible, interview successful leaders and ask them how they developed as leaders. You should approach every situation as an opportunity to learn something new, even if it is how not to lead.

Become a lifelong learner Continue your pursuit of learning as a regular component of your supervisory job including looking for books, newspapers, magazines, and online resources. By modeling the behavior of a learner, you also set the stage for your employees to grow and develop. If you are new to the role of leadership, this chapter can be a springboard to deeper knowledge and enhanced understanding of leadership behavior.



Find the challenges that are right for you Some supervisory work requires less emphasis on leadership and more emphasis on management and administration. While this work is necessary and important, it doesn't mean that you can't be a leader, too. Being a leader involves establishing relationships, building trust, coaching, and empowering employees to succeed. Taking on these leadership challenges helps the organization achieve its goals and will be personally and professionally rewarding.

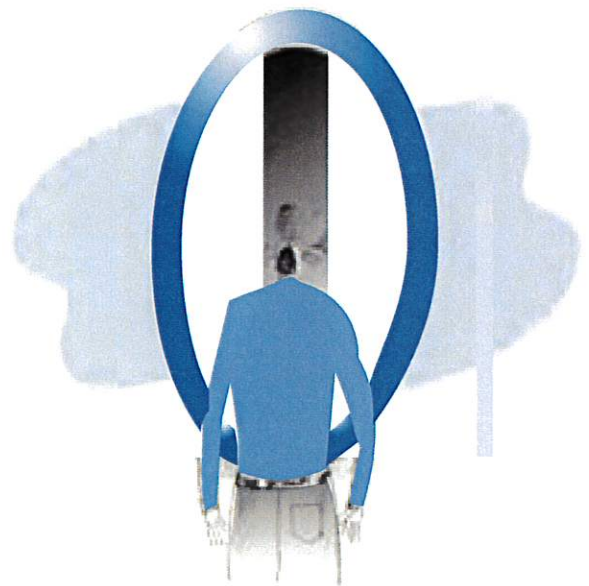
Whatever your aspirations, if you wish to exert positive influence in larger circles within your organization, consider seeking projects that will test your leadership capacity and stretch your leadership skills. You may also choose to develop leadership skills outside your place of employment such as through community leadership. Local chambers of commerce, schools, religious groups, the local chapter of your professional association, and all types of volunteer organizations are always looking for effective leaders.


Develop a plan to improve your leadership skills and capacity After gathering information and feedback about your leadership behavior, develop a simple but powerful plan for becoming a stronger leader. Begin by focusing on a few leadership behaviors that you want to address first, work on those, and then seek feedback about the impact of your efforts.

Feedback for self-awareness

Researchers have yet to agree on any single group of qualities that characterize all leaders, nor have they found any one leadership style that characterizes all effective leaders. These findings support the idea that whatever your personality or style, you can become an effective and successful leader. That's why knowing who you are and being aware of your strengths and areas needing development are critical to leading others.

One way to increase self-awareness is to gather information about others' perceptions of your leadership style. Ask superiors, colleagues, and employees what they see as





your most effective and least effective behaviors. Be receptive to their feedback. Your employees, given anonymity, will give more valid and realistic descriptions of your leadership behavior than either you or your boss will. Your peers and direct reports—those who are the consumers of your leadership skills—tend to have the most useful perceptions of your leadership behavior. Be sure to look for recurring themes rather than focusing on isolated comments that don't match the rest of the feedback.

Your leadership influence and success are directly related to two factors:

- How your colleagues and subordinates perceive your leadership behavior
- How your leadership behavior directly affects them.

So becoming more self-aware is an important step in improving your ability to influence members of your team.

SUPERVISORY TIP: GETTING FEEDBACK FROM AN ADMIRER LEADER

Have a discussion with someone you admire as a good leader. Ask that person to observe you in a meeting with your staff and provide feedback on your interaction with employees. Then ask for coaching on how you could improve.

Self-care and personal development

If you fit the typical career pattern for supervisors, you probably didn't start out with supervisory responsibilities. You were probably promoted because of your technical ability and now have to sort through what it means to lead others. In an ideal world, you would have had a chance to prepare for your leadership role or gone through intensive training when you were first promoted. However, it is more likely that much of your background for this new responsibility comes from on-the-job experience.

Leadership self-care has three dimensions: physical, intellectual, and emotional. By assessing your capacity in each dimension, you can find ways to strengthen your leadership ability.

Physical fitness

Being in a leadership role is often physically demanding. You are probably working longer hours and face more stress because of your organizational responsibilities. Maintaining your physical well-being and managing your stress are important to leadership effectiveness. Whether the approach is simple (daily walks) or more complex (regular exercise, weight lifting, or yoga), you should make an effort to increase physical activity to support a healthy lifestyle. Being physically active will also help you be a more energetic leader.



SUPERVISORY TIP: ON-THE-JOB EXERCISE
What about a “walking meeting?” It gets you and your employees out of the office and away from interruptions and stressors. The meeting walk encourages creative thinking and action while giving the entire team a valuable exercise break.



Intellectual fitness

Staying current with emerging trends in your field, pursuing opportunities to gain new knowledge, being up-to-date on current events that affect your customers or the services you deliver, and being recognized as a technical expert and organizational resource are all indicators of intellectual fitness. Your ability to share your knowledge and technical competence with your team and the customers you serve will contribute to your capacity and stature as an effective leader.



Emotional fitness

It can be difficult to get your work done when you arrive at the office with your emotional bags packed. If there are stresses and strains in your life, pay attention to them. Take some time off, relax, do activities you enjoy, and accept that ignoring your emotional health may lead to bigger problems.

If you find yourself struggling with emotional issues, seek professional help. Most organizations have an employee assistance program (EAP) that can help you deal with emotional challenges or refer you to an appropriate resource. Your ability to lead and supervise is directly related to your ability to maintain your emotional fitness.

Self-care takes many forms. Look inward to find what works for you, whether it is yoga, meditation, spiritual or religious practice, artistic expression, or relaxing with a good book. Knowing what you value determines the choices you make on a daily basis. Find an approach that supports your spirit and recharges your batteries.

WHAT'S YOUR EQ?

Your emotional intelligence, or EQ, is as important in the workplace as your IQ. Daniel Goleman describes a four-part model for emotional intelligence.

1. **Self-awareness:** The ability to read your own emotions, know your strengths and limitations, and recognize how your moods affect others.
2. **Self-management:** The ability to control your emotions and act with honesty and integrity in reliable and adaptable ways.
3. **Social awareness:** The ability to sense other people's emotions and show you care by changing your words and actions when their impact on others is negative.
4. **Relationship management:** The ability to communicate clearly and convincingly, disarm conflicts, and build strong personal bonds, often with humor and kindness.

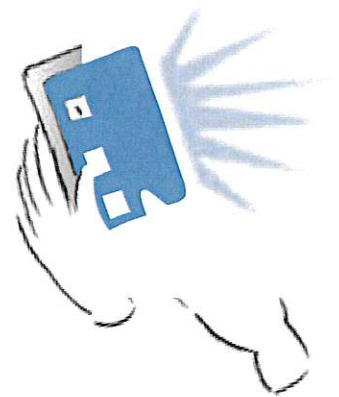
Adapted from Daniel Goleman, Richard Boyatzis, and Annie McKee, "Primal Leadership: The Hidden Driver of Great Performance," *Harvard Business Review* (Product No. 8296), December 2001, 49.

A lifelong journey

Becoming an effective and successful leader is a lifelong journey. There isn't one path to leadership enlightenment or one specific set of skills that will guarantee success. While some people may be born with a predisposition toward leadership, everyone has a degree of leadership potential that is waiting to be tapped. Leading others, helping them to grow, and contributing to organizational and departmental success can be a remarkably rewarding professional experience. Recognize that it is a journey, and take the time to enjoy it.

CHECKLIST

- Be aware that the practice of leadership is a blend of concern for others and concern for task.
- Think of leadership as a lifelong learning journey.
- Practice the philosophy that anyone can be a leader; few leaders are born and leadership can be learned.
- Avoid relying on the power and authority associated with your position to lead and motivate.
- Earn the trust and respect of your employees; trust and respect make it possible to influence others without recourse to power or authority.
- Remember that leadership development begins and ends with a fundamental understanding of how others perceive your behavior and how your behavior affects others.
- Recognize that leadership self-care will contribute to your success as a leader.
- Stay focused on learning about leadership, including consulting the list of recommended resources at the back of this book.

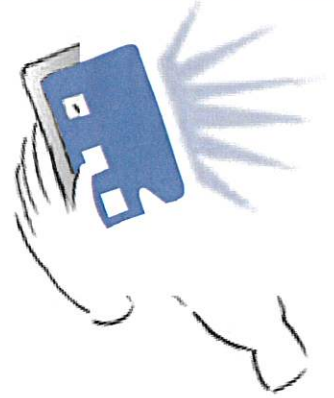


Endnotes

- 1 Peter M. Senge, "The Practice of Innovation," in *Leader to Leader*, Frances Hesselbein and Paul M. Cohen, editors (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999), 18–22.
- 2 Frances Hesselbein, "Introduction" in *Leader to Leader*, Frances Hesselbein and Paul M. Cohen, editors (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1999).
- 3 Robert Rosen, *Leading People* (New York: Viking Press, 1995), 15.
- 4 Ken Blanchard, *Leading at a Higher Level* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey, Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2007), 87–88.
- 5 James Kouzes and Barry Posner, *The Leadership Practices Inventory Leadership Development Planner* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Pfeiffer, 1997), 5.

CHECKLIST

- Recognize the broad role you play in achieving organizational goals and the need to hone your technical, management, and people skills.
- Be a leader, not a boss.
- Focus on the difference between leading and managing, and develop your skills in each.
- If you are a new supervisor, adjust your relationships with former peers to adapt to your new role and responsibilities.
- Involve employees in decision making to draw on their expertise and to gain their commitment.
- Invest in building and sustaining a team made up of people who trust and rely on each other.
- Provide opportunities for employee growth and development.
- Delegate tasks and authority, but be available for guidance and direction.
- Strive to make jobs more interesting and challenging.
- Learn how to build relationships across organizational boundaries.
- Focus on employee strengths.
- Take the time and effort to identify problems before they get out of hand.



Endnotes

- 1 John Kotter, *Leading Change* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996), 71.
- 2 Dick Grote, *The Performance Appraisal Questions and Answer Book* (New York: American Management Association, 2002).
- 3 Frederick Herzberg, Bernard Mausner, and Barbara Bloch Snyderman, *The Motivation to Work*, 2nd ed. (New York: Wiley, 1959).
- 4 *Managing Employees through Times of Economic Upheaval* (Arlington, VA: Corporate Executive Board, 2008).



THE ETHICS GAME
How Honest Are YOU?

YES NO

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11 12

QUESTIONS:

- Am I The Sole Beneficiary?
- Is My Judgment Cloudy?
- Is It In Step With Our Values?
- Is It My Finest Hour?
- Would My Dad Do It?
- Would My Spouse Do It?
- Does it Meet The Spirit of the Law?
- Should I Accept a Free Lunch?
- Should I Accept a Free Trip?
- Does it Follow the Law?
- Will I Feel Guilty?
- Good Job! Get Out of Jail!
- Is It Fair Play?
- Does It Have Integrity?
- TOOK BRIBE GO TO JAIL
- CROOKED DEAL GO TO JAIL
- JAIL

