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Supervisory savvy: Top 10 skills for success

Several weeks ago, my grandson was complaining about how his boss doesn't know how to talk to people — from customers to employees. My grandson continued to comment, "Grandma, I went to high school with this kid, we're the same age (22), and because he recently was promoted to assistant manager, he acts like everyone is dirt on the bottom of his shoe!" Unfortunately, those types of comments are quite common these days. The boss can be 22 or 52, from retail to corporate, and the remarks are similar.

In today's workplace, managers, for the most part, want new supervisors to be able to "hit the ground running." Very little, if any, supervisory training is provided. "On-the-job" training seems to be the strategy du jour. If the new person has not been mentored, has no effective role models or simply does not have a clue, trouble is sure to abound.

There are many books on the subject you can read; however, in the meantime, I would like to share some signposts that may be helpful to the first-time supervisor:

- *Ooze credibility.* Research continues to indicate credibility is a key attribute employees want from their supervisor. Credibility is a status that is earned through being competent, having a clear sense of where your team is headed, caring about the team, possessing a high level of integrity and role modeling behavior you expect from your staff.

- *Determine the big picture.*

Begin slowly. Reassure your team it will be "business as usual" at least until you get the lay of the land. Be sure to get the team's input for changes that may need to be made. Recognize early on there will be team members who probably know more about things than you do. Though you will need to establish your authority, you will also need to empower your employees as members of the team.

- *Set clear expectations.* As a supervisor, it is your responsibility to ensure your team understands what is expected of them. Clear expectations are quite valuable in the performance management process. And, of course, be sure to provide both positive and constructive feedback.

- *Communicate, communicate, communicate.* Communication is fundamental to every effectively functioning team as well as a key strategy for building relationships, which lead to trust and respect. Observe, ask questions, solicit input and actively listen. Encourage your team to seek clarification whenever necessary — be approachable and open to questions.

- *Create a listening comfort zone.* Recognize your team may be intimidated by you. So, demonstrate you are willing to listen to what they have to say. When team members believe they are being listened to they feel valued, they feel you care and they feel they are worthy of your time.

- *Manage by working around.* Be visible. Build relationships with your team. Get to know them, what's im-

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portant to them at work and in their personal lives. Put forth the effort to establish effective two-way communication.

- *Be respectful.* One strategy for earning respect as a supervisor is to show respect for your team. Since a definition of management is "getting things done through others," it is crucial for team success that you treat everyone respectfully and courteously.

- *Acknowledge your staff.* When a team member performs an outstanding job, make sure you notice and acknowledge the efforts with praise and recognition. Praise is one of the key motivational techniques that exists. One of the greatest needs we have as human beings is to be appreciated for a job well done.

- *Ascribe to continuous self-improvement.* Great supervisors are highly competent because they are committed to a high level of learning, growth and improvement. Spend 15-30 minutes each day devoted to learning something new. Encourage your team to do likewise.

- *Develop and maintain a positive attitude.* Dr. Norman Vincent Peale's book, "The Power of Positive Thinking," is still one of the most read books in the world because most of us want to be inspired to think positively. As a supervisor, recognize how to generate the power within yourself, and then to transmit it to your team.

For more information on Dr. White's programs and publications, visit www.successimages.com or call (225) 769-2307. ●