

CREATING A SUSTAINABLE LEADERSHIP/ SUPERVISOR DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM

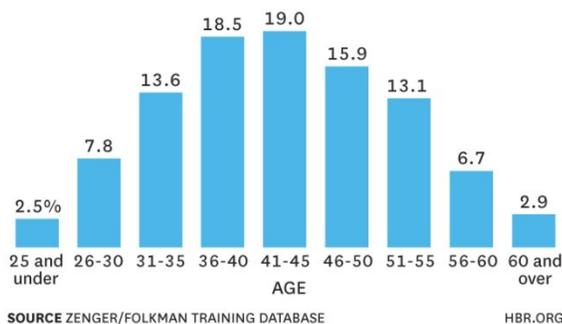
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At TAP Resource Development Group, we are always touting the importance of starting leadership development early. But we're not alone, and other proponents of this strategy will tell you the same thing: We're waiting too long to train our leaders.

In a recent Harvard Business Review blog post¹, Jack Zenger made this point, pulling alarming statistics from the HBR's database of 17,000 worldwide leaders. It turns out that most managers received leadership training around age 42. Yet the average age for becoming a supervisor is 33. That means many current leaders are in fact practicing the job for years, without the tools and knowledge that could turn a good leader into a great one.

WHEN DO MANAGERS FIRST GET LEADERSHIP TRAINING?

On average, at age 42—about 10 years after they began supervising people.



The implication of Zenger's data is that organizations wait until a manager is well into middle management or above before providing leadership training, if they provide it at all. Workers are promoted into supervisor positions because they have good technical skills, not because they are good with people or have good supervisory potential. The result is that by the time a

front-line supervisor is exposed to leadership training they have developed many bad habits. As Zenger says, "Practicing without training ingrains bad habits." Beginning with their first day on the job, front-line supervisors are leading people. For most of us, practicing anything important without training can range from dysfunctional to disastrous. "The fact that so many of your managers are practicing leadership without training should alarm you." (Jack Zenger, HBR Blog)

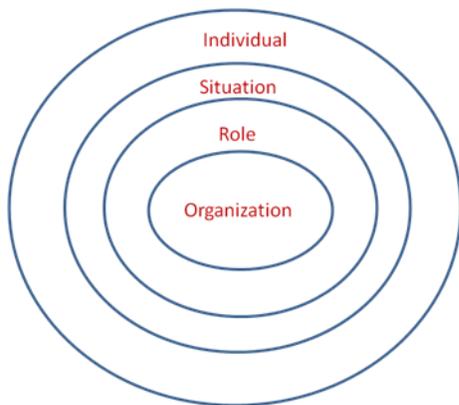
Since many of our seasoned leaders and supervisors will be retiring soon and new leaders will be asked to step into those positions, now is an opportune time to create a comprehensive, organization-wide leadership development program that begins at first hire and builds to meet the growing needs of our maturing leaders at all levels of the organization. This could mean that part of the on-boarding experience of every new employee would be supervisory training. If not at first hire, then at least before assuming any supervisory activity including leading a team or chairing a workgroup or committee.

I hear some of you saying "but we already do supervisory training in our on-boarding process." That may be true, but most of the time that training is focused on basic procedures that the new supervisor must be aware of, such as time-cards, budgeting, hiring and firing, discrimination and sexual harassment protocol, etc. While important, these programs often don't provide training into the actual role of the supervisor. The rest of this article will discuss what such a program should look like by discussing the following five broad program components:

- Self-Awareness
- Core responsibilities and roles of a supervisor
- The Employee Cycle
- When things go South
- Organizational Culture and Leadership Styles

SELF-AWARENESS

Management Research Group® (MRG) has identified four filters that help define effective leadership: the Organization, Role, Situation, and Individual filters. The Organization filter is an organization's attempt to identify the leadership culture that supports the organization's objectives. This is where a major portion of most leadership development programs is focused. However, it doesn't determine whether an individual is an effective leader. The other three filters are important in determining effectiveness. While the importance of the Role and Situation filters are fairly self-explanatory, the demands of the Individual filter are often ignored.



Supervisory training must begin with self-awareness; a clear understanding of ourselves and the different ways that people behave. There are a number of instruments that can assist with this process, including Myers/Briggs, Keirsey Temperament Sorter, DISC, etc. However, a facilitated process to help develop and clarify the information that is gathered and then relate it to the different filters is very important.

CORE RESPONSIBILITIES OF A SUPERVISOR

When an employee moves into a supervisory position, their responsibilities change from being responsible for themselves and their technical work to representing the interests of the organization. The supervisor must ensure that the work of the organization is accomplished *by other people* rather than by themselves. This is a key transition that must be recognized and it's often one of the most difficult. This *shift* requires a shift in perspective that must be addressed in supervisory training. Making the transition

from working with one's peers to supervising them is perhaps one of the most difficult aspects of becoming a supervisor. This transition from a focus on the work or task to getting work done through others provides the foundation of the issues addressed by training, such as communication, delegation, feedback, follow-up, performance management, coaching, and recognizing and rewarding. In addition, supervisors must ensure that their employees have the information and resources needed to be successful.

THE EMPLOYEE CYCLE

Supervisory training should include a discussion of the various components that make up the Employee Cycle. This cycle begins with the development of the job or position description and includes selection. But it also includes the employee's development through the entire time they are part of a supervisor work group, and perhaps beyond. This requires on-boarding, coaching, training, guiding, rewarding and helping them achieve their individual goals.

Managing people can be tricky, primarily because people have moods and opinions; they are motivated differently and have different goals. For many new to supervision, it's the *people* side of things that is the most challenging to contend with. New supervisors need ongoing support to effectively manage the people side of the equation. Once they learn how to manage the diverse needs of their work team, it often becomes the most rewarding part of the job!

WHEN THINGS GO SOUTH

No matter how effective a supervisor is, or how hard they work, there will be times when things don't go as planned, work doesn't get done, or employees don't get along with each other. Many of us see conflict as a negative, as something to avoid. However, if we understand conflict and the various ways that people address conflict, it can actually be a positive. In any case, supervisors need to understand conflict and the various ways that people deal with it.

This involves first understanding your own preferences as a supervisor, and learning how to handle conflict in different ways. One of the most valuable skills is the ability to understand when you as the supervisor are experiencing performance problems. These problems

often happen because employees are not clear on "what they are supposed to do" and "how well they are supposed to perform tasks."

We recommend that a core part of any supervisor curriculum focus on resolving and managing workplace conflict. The goal is to increase a supervisor's tolerance for conflict and ability to weather different types of conflict.

ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE AND LEADERSHIP STYLES

To be effective a supervisor must understand the organization and what makes it tick. The true nature of an organization is a pattern of dynamic relationships. This pattern at the organizational level describes the organization's culture. Research has determined that an organization's culture has a very powerful influence on the organization; so powerful, in fact, that its impact supersedes all other factors when it comes to organizational performance.

A management idea, no matter how good, will not work in practice (implementation) if it does not fit the culture of the organization. It's important for supervisors to understand the connection between an organization's culture and leadership and how it relates to any management program. Understanding an organization's culture helps a leader understand how to develop change programs that are consistent with the organization's mission and vision.

Part of the problem is the assumption that there is only one right way to lead. If that's the case, why are there dozens and dozens of books on leadership in your local book store, let alone the massive listing on Amazon (100 pages long)? Compare Andrew Grove's, former CEO of Intel, book *High Output Management*, Joseph Franklin's *Building Leaders the West Point Way*, and Max Depew's *Leadership is an Art*. Each of these authors may be effective leaders in their organizations, but each of these organizations vary significantly from each other, as would the type of leadership style needed in order to successfully lead the organization. There are at least 4 different leadership styles; Participative, Directive, Standard Setter, and Charismatic. It is important that your supervisory training program examines the different styles and their relationship to the four leadership filters.

CONCLUSION

Leadership development must begin at the beginning of your employee's experience with an organization. Why wait? Begin the leadership continuum well before your employee is exposed to any supervisory opportunities by implementing a supervisory training program that includes the program components outlined above. Such a program, combined with more advanced leadership development, will assist the organization in aligning its leadership performance and building satisfaction among employees that understand and exemplify effective leadership, regardless of where they are at in the organization.

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or email us at info@tapresource.com
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