



Helping Newly Promoted Managers Succeed – Good for Them. Good for You.

Part 1 in a 12-Part Series on Helping Individual Contributors and Seasoned, but Untrained, Supervisors Transition to Effective Leaders

“The magic formula that successful businesses have discovered is to treat customers like guests and employees like people.”

–Tom Peters,
A Passion for Excellence

About the Supervisory Basics Article Series

The transition from an individual contributor to a supervisor or manager role is one of the most critical and difficult career moves. Representing the largest pool of management talent in most companies, supervisors prove critical to an organization's success. Companies that develop superior leaders can execute more effectively than their competition.

Research about employee engagement provides evidence that frontline supervisors play a crucial role in the productivity and morale of their employees. The link to customer service is equally significant. When untrained supervisors are in charge of frontline employees with customer contact, the impact on customer relationships can be devastating. Based on negative interactions with supervisors, frontline employees may exhibit negative attitudes, resolve problems incorrectly, or take other actions that damage goodwill, brand and profits!

This article, *Helping Newly Promoted Managers Succeed – Good for Them. Good for You* is based on Module #1 from [The Supervisory Basics Series](#), which provides a framework for starting out in a new supervisory or management position. The Supervisory Basics Series consists of 12 individual yet linked two-hour modules, delivered in leader-led or eLearning formats, helping managers understand the management behaviors and tactics required to ensure their own and their company's success. More information on The Supervisory Basics Series can be found at the conclusion of this article.



Listen to the Supervisory Basics Podcast Series: *Tips for Managers and HR Professionals on Helping Individual Contributors Transition to Effective Leaders*. Visit impactachievement.com.

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Nearly 60% of frontline managers underperform during their first two years in the seat.

Introduction

When an employee is promoted to a new managerial job or hired directly into a new managerial job – perhaps straight from college, the new manager is required to use additional skills to the ones he/she used to rise as a star independent contributor to the company. Many companies and their stars fail to recognize this fact and leave their success to luck and the proverbial “throwing spaghetti at the wall to see if it sticks.” This is bad strategy, as “nearly 60% of frontline managers underperform during their first two years in the seat, driving performance gaps and employee turnover across the entire frontline.”¹

However, the mindful development and training of new supervisors and managers in people skills, customer focus, and performance management skills leads to “high-performing direct reports” that create value for the customers and a winning, successful business formula.

People Skills in the Beginning

While some level of technical expertise is necessary for supervisory positions – depending on the specific supervisory job – nothing makes up for failure to develop people skills. There are basically two kinds of bosses: good bosses and bad bosses. Good bosses demonstrate clear and consistent patterns of challenge and support. They are neither “softies” nor people who don’t require best efforts. At the same time, good bosses are often credited with providing true encouragement and support that enables high performance.

Good new managers also:

- **Model appropriate behavior.** Bad bosses use a wide variety of awful/poor behaviors – and many of them are character issues. Character issues trickle down to employees, often resulting in lack of discretionary effort, company loyalty, and inappropriate behavior.
- **Are patient.** Going slowly in the beginning earns the respect and credibility necessary to make changes – even those that not everyone agrees with – in the future. Making changes and quick decisions when first starting a new supervisory or managerial role can hurt effectiveness.
- **Learn about direct reports.** What are an employee’s strengths and weaknesses? Knowing who is good at what is critical to getting work done.

¹ Business Wire. September 2007

- **Are visible and accessible.** The more accessible a supervisor or manager is, the smaller the “learning curve” for getting to know and understand the boss. The more a manager is out-and-about (management by walking around), the more dialogue will take place. Being visible also improves productivity, as the mere presence of a supervisor communicates supervisory interest in the work and attention to quality of the work.

Troubleshooting in the Beginning

Friendships are an area where new managers often find trouble. A common mistake new supervisors make is assuming that everyone else is as excited about their promotion as they are – or that friends will have the same approach to the relationship as they do. For many, a new supervisory or management role requires supervising or managing friends or past peers. This must be handled with care. Common pitfalls the new manager needs to avoid: apologizing for the new position; showing favoritism instead of managing performance; emphasizing friendships beyond the workplace while at work; and being artificial – pretending the friendship doesn’t exist.

Some good-natured ribbing, especially from friends or coworkers, is normal. However, others, for a variety of reasons, either might resent the promotion or not know when enough is enough and keep up the teasing or snipes. Sometimes, just ignoring the needling stops the behavior. Otherwise, if it keeps going, the best way to handle that situation is for the manager to keep composure. He/she neither needs to justify their new position/promotion nor humor the situation. Make it clear that that commentary is unacceptable. Maintain confidence. Dealing with the situation immediately increases the new manager’s influence and gains him/her respect from most people. The fact is that the nature of friendships is changed and often challenged due to a supervisor or managerial relationship. This must be managed effectively.

Initial Team Meetings

Initial team meetings are where expectations are set, a “feeling out” process occurs, and opinions get formed. The first few meetings are used to set a supervisory tone, establish initial credibility, clearly communicate confidence in the new position and clarify performance expectations. The new manager needs to identify essential content pieces for the first team/group meeting. These include: reassurance that it will be business as normal; reassurance that everyone has a clean slate; stressing teamwork and cooperation; emphasizing open and candid communication both ways; and the “no surprises” rule (if they have problems or difficulties, they should be brought to the new manager’s attention).

To get off to a good start, the following tips are suggested for having a productive and successful first meeting:

- Have it soon.
- Make it short.
- Have the meeting at the end of the day if possible.
- Make the topic simple – for instance, expectations in general.
- Leave some time for questions.

Conclusion

In the end, education is key. With careful planning and grooming on the part of the company and thoughtful motivation and practice on the part of the new manager, successful leadership can be nurtured and accomplished.

In the next article (article two of our 12-article series) the role business acumen – an understanding of how a business creates value and makes money – plays in the success of new managers will be discussed. Nothing is as critical as creating long-term customer value and ensuring that the impact on customers is not overlooked. Learn how to incorporate the customer's point of view into performance results.

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About the Supervisory Basics Series

The [Supervisory Basics Series](#) is based on extensive analysis of the competencies required of transitioning individual contributors and seasoned, but untrained, supervisors. This series provides the knowledge, tools, and skills to immediately establish a leadership role and helps participants understand how to avoid the typical traps of new supervisors and managers.

The Supervisory Basics Series helps managers understand the management behaviors and tactics required to ensure their own and their company's success. The result is managers establishing themselves in a legitimate position of power, inspiring superior performance and promoting open, effective communication. Supervisory Basics also helps beginning managers avoid common new manager traps – lack of clarity in expectations, ineffective communications, not establishing personal

power, and failing to move from “doer” to leader. Such negative behaviors lead to absenteeism, low morale, lost productivity and customer loyalty, as well as increased attrition.

The series consists of 12 individual yet linked two-hour modules, delivered in leader-led or eLearning formats. Companies can choose flexible implementation, including an integrated 3-day series, stand-alone sessions, mix and match, and external facilitator or train-the-trainer options. Participants will learn to build credibility, establish legitimate position power, earn personal power, “manage up,” understand legal basics and conduct purposeful workplace discussions. [Download the brochure.](#)

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