

THE TRUTH ABOUT SUPERVISION

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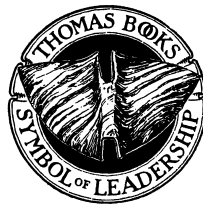
Second Edition

THE TRUTH ABOUT SUPERVISION

Coaching, Teamwork, Interviewing, Appraisals,
360° Assessments, Delegation, and Recognition

By

ANNE O'BRIEN CARELLI, PH.D.



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PREFACE

Supervisors may be managing projects by videoconference, or tracking employees and tasks on their phones, but the basic skills of supervision have not changed.

This book is for supervisors who need realistic information about how to do some of the principal tasks of a supervisor. It does not matter whether they are meeting with employees on the assembly line or conducting a discussion with employees who are located around the world. Strong supervisors use the same skills.

The Truth About Supervision: Coaching, Teamwork, Interviewing, Appraisals, 360° Assessments, Delegation, and Recognition provides detailed information for both new and experienced supervisors, as well as for employees and students who desire to become supervisors.

The book was created in response to thousands of participants in supervisory training programs who were seeking basic, frank information about how to conduct key tasks of a supervisor. The training participants repeatedly indicated that they needed a resource that would quickly supply them with succinct answers to questions about supervisory issues.

Supervisors who work in factories, hospitals, banks, offices, or any other work setting have the same questions because the essential tasks of a supervisor are universally similar. Many of the questions addressed in the book were raised repeatedly in classes for new supervisors, as well as in training sessions with experienced supervisors. They wanted clear-cut steps, down-to-earth advice, and practical recommendations.

The examples of true experiences that are included in the book are from a variety of workplaces such as manufacturing plants, health care centers, law enforcement agencies, educational organizations, and businesses.

The material contained in this book is also based on the author's experiences in working with hundreds of supervisors (or potential supervisors) in a variety of settings. It became apparent that supervisors everywhere needed assistance in how to:

- guide and ***coach*** employees
- conduct job ***interviews*** that are informative and fair
- design and implement efficient ***teamwork***
- carry out comfortable and effective ***performance appraisals***, including ***360° assessments*** that involve multiple evaluations
- ***delegate*** tasks to employees who willingly accept the challenge
- ***recognize*** employees for their accomplishments and ***reward*** them for making positive contributions.

The question-and-answer format allows supervisors to research a specific problem or read an overview of a topic. Supervisors are encouraged to discuss the contents of the chapters with colleagues and managers. Whenever a new activity or program is implemented, especially in an effort to comply with the law, supervisors should consult with their Human Resources/Personnel Department and/or obtain the advice of a legal representative of the organization.

SELF-ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Included in *The Truth About Supervision* are 33 self-assessment tools that give supervisors the opportunity to check on their skills. The handouts are provided at the end of every chapter and in a CD included with the book.

Supervisors can use the self-assessment tools to plan for coaching and delegation, evaluate interviewing skills, assess communication and appraisal skills, and review the elements of successful teamwork.

A.O.C.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book evolved from years of consulting with supervisors who were brave enough to share their concerns, ideas, and frustrations in professional training programs. They had to admit that they did not always know how to do their jobs effectively, and they participated in the training sessions with open minds and a willingness to self-assess and learn. My thanks to the thousands of training participants who asked questions, shared stories, and tackled problems. As all teachers know, you learn something new every day from your students.

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THE TRUTH ABOUT SUPERVISION

Chapter 1

THE TRUTH ABOUT COACHING

I guess I better reserve an hour for coaching.

(Customer Service Supervisor, preparing to discipline an employee.)

Supervisors who understand the purpose of coaching discover that it is a valuable managerial tool. Coaching allows supervisors the opportunity to provide employees with information, support, and direction.

Coaching is not disciplining and it should never take an hour. When a supervisor stops an employee in the hall and quickly reviews a new procedure, that is *coaching*. When the supervisor meets privately for a few minutes with an employee and provides ideas about how to improve a presentation, that is *coaching*. When the supervisor calls an employee into the office and *briefly* reviews expectations about work policies, that is *coaching*.

Supervisors who are good coaches realize that coaching is a short interaction with one employee who needs immediate guidance. It is not a review of performance in general, or a disciplinary session. It is not meant for identifying employees who are failing at their jobs, or for warning employees who refuse to meet organizational standards. Coaching is an educational process, designed for steering employees in the right direction, and for providing information and support so that employees can succeed.

Coaching is based on the premise that employees want to learn and want to do things correctly. Coaching allows supervisors to intervene when they spot confused or struggling employees, or employees who are not following organizational policies or procedures. By coaching, supervisors can guide employees back on track. If the coaching is done

in an efficient and sensitive manner, then employees learn from the experience and welcome the interest and guidance of their supervisors.

This chapter covers the purpose of coaching, as well as the steps and strategies that can assist supervisors in coaching effectively.

1. WHAT EXACTLY IS COACHING?

The term *coaching* conjures up images of an athletic coach, whistle in hand, yelling from the sidelines and lecturing in the locker room. Coaching in the workplace is not quite as dramatic. Effective supervisors are actually coaching their employees throughout the entire workday because most coaching is informal, and takes place “on the run,” requiring a few minutes of quick, focused interaction.

Coaching does not mean long conversations, tension-filled dialogues, and written goals and action plans. It does not mean that an employee is in “big trouble” and needs to be put back in line. It does not mean that discipline is necessary, and a closed-door meeting is in order. Coaching occurs when a supervisor observes a behavior that indicates that an employee needs quick guidance. Before the employee can get completely off track, the supervisor connects with the employee, provides information and encouragement, and then moves on. Coaching takes place when it is necessary to prevent a minor problem from getting worse.

The employee gains new knowledge and direction from coaching, as well as support from the supervisor. Coaching can take two minutes or 15 minutes, but it rarely becomes a lengthy conversation unless additional problems surface.

Supervisors know that they are coaching when the interaction with the employee is an *intervention* that is *individualized* and *instructional*. It is a quick *intervention* when a supervisor spots the *first signs* of:

- faulty work behavior
- lagging work behavior
- employee confusion, complaining, or work avoidance
- employee unrealistic expectations
- employee need for encouragement.

The coaching session is *individualized* because it is conducted privately, one-to-one, and immediately after the need for intervention is determined.

The coaching is *instructional* because the purpose of the coaching session is to quickly educate employees. For example, employees may need to be reminded about expectations, deadlines, and standards. They may not have realized that they are failing to follow organizational policies or procedures. They may be falling behind because they need help with time management or skill development. It is the responsibility of supervisors to catch the first signs of stumbling, and then to coach employees so that they can learn how to improve. The employees will then feel confident that supervisors will provide support and guidance.

Once supervisors understand that a major part of their job is to educate employees, then coaching happens automatically. It means that supervisors are teaching when it is needed, keeping an eye out for employees who may need assistance, and praising when improvements occur.

2. WHY IS IT IMPORTANT TO COACH?

Coaching is essential because it is better to catch a problem in its initial stages than to wait until employees are really in trouble. Since coaching is a quick, informal intervention, the results can be an immediate change in the behavior of employees.

Although it is often tempting to ignore a problem to see if the employee solves it, or to avoid an interaction with an employee because it might be tense, it is better to step in, provide guidance, and then step back again. The employee now knows what the supervisor expects, and, if appropriate information is provided, the employee can concentrate on getting work done effectively.

Coaching also tells employees that the supervisor is paying close attention, has expertise and ideas to share, and is interested in assisting employees in doing their best work. If coaching is done on a routine basis, then employees are not threatened by the process. They see it as an opportunity to learn how they are doing and to gain clear direction on what they can do better.

Although coaching is not intended to serve as a substitute for performance appraisals, the coaching session can provide valuable infor-

Signs of Good Coaching

Coaching is intervention that is individualized and instructional.

Check off below what you try to do when you are coaching.

Do you show the signs of good coaching?

	First Sign of Good Coaching: The coach makes sure that the employee has the right “tools” to do the job. Tools include training, staff, equipment, or other resources.
	Second Sign of Good Coaching: The coach shares information in a way that provides moral support, good instruction, and a pat on the back.
	Third Sign of Good Coaching: The coach is very clear about expectations. The coach explains how something is done <i>right</i> and what <i>evidence</i> will show that the employee understands.
	Fourth Sign of Good Coaching: The coach outlines consequences only if the employee <i>consistently</i> does not follow policies and procedures. The coach may have to explain the impact of poor work behavior. The coach may have to explain that <i>discipline</i> will be next.

Coaching only works if the Supervisor is willing to communicate.

Chapter 2

THE TRUTH ABOUT TEAMWORK

I want you all to work in teams from now on.

(Nurse Manager, speaking to hospital nurses attending an annual planning meeting.)

It is easy to tell when an organization has established a successful team-based management system. Employees routinely take the initiative to meet together to discuss how to achieve the goals of the day and the mission of the organization. They analyze their responsibilities and progress, and make recommendations about productivity, safety, and cost-effective policies and procedures. Supervisors work closely with their teams to determine what needs to be accomplished, and then leave it up to the teams to decide how to get it done. They provide consultation and direction but are free to work on managerial tasks while the teams concentrate on organizing the workday. In a strong team-based environment, there is constant open communication, trust, and a routine flow of ideas and problem-solving.

Is this really possible? Can groups of people work together so well that they share in decision-making, openly express opinions, and determine priorities and job assignments? Can employees really feel as if their ideas and suggestions are taken seriously? Can supervisors feel comfortable empowering employees to take on tasks that were traditionally the responsibility of management?

It is possible. True teamwork exists in a variety of organizations, including large processing plants, international financial institutions, nonprofit organizations, and small businesses. Team-based management is based on the notion that employees at all levels bring unique skills, creativity, and experience to their jobs, and those qualities should be recognized and cultivated. If the talents of all employees are

tapped, then the organization benefits with more ideas and better decisions. Many organizations have discovered that quality teamwork results in improvements in all aspects of the workplace.

In organizations that have a true commitment to maintaining teamwork, with the concerns of both managers and employees taken into consideration, it is possible to establish a team-based climate that is comfortable and productive.

Supervisors are crucial in the team-building process. Their understanding of the purpose and benefits of teams, as well as the phases of implementation, plays an important role in establishing a team-based environment that is supported by all levels of the organization. In this chapter, key elements of team-building are discussed, including the phases of teamwork, the steps to implementing teams, the role of leadership, and strategies for overcoming barriers to establishing successful team-based management.

1. WHAT EXACTLY IS A “TEAM”?

A “team” in the workplace is different than a traditional “work group” because of the high level of employee interaction and communication. The emphasis is on sharing information, gathering ideas, and coming to agreement on the best ways to get jobs done. “Teamwork” in any type of organization, whether it is an office, manufacturing plant, or hospital, means that employees:

- set and monitor work goals together
- establish systems of team communication
- routinely meet to share information
- work closely with supervisors to plan and carry out work
- routinely participate in decisions that affect daily work
- routinely provide input into organizational decisions
- make daily decisions without supervisory approval
- evaluate the effectiveness of communication
- have many opportunities to share expertise and to develop skills and interests.

In many cases, teams are expected to make decisions related to their daily work, without supervisory direction. The teams meet often,

How Well Do You Appraise?

- ☐ My performance appraisals are completed when they are due.
- ☐ I have been coaching employees so appraisals are not a surprise.
- ☐ I can document my comments.
- ☐ I weigh feedback from other sources.
- ☐ I don't compare or rank employees.
- ☐ I review basic expectations and organizational standards.
- ☐ My comments are objective and based on personal observations, not hearsay.
- ☐ I review accomplishments but focus on new goals.
- ☐ When discussing areas of improvement I have realistic strategies.
- ☐ I pave the way for employee growth by providing guidance.
- ☐ My conclusions and recommendations are specific.
- ☐ I help employees to explore new challenges and opportunities.

What do employees want to know more than anything?

“How am I doing?”
