

Course Syllabus for

# **The Role of the Supervisor**

**WEST COAST  
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

Center for Management Training and Development

By Dennis J. Rohan, Ph.D.

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## Author's Note

The paragraphs that follow identify a new approach to management training and development.

West Coast Industrial Relations Center for Management Training and Development has devised a system of training for first-line supervisors and managers which we believe is unparalleled in the United States.

Our professional supervisory package is designed to accomplish one key objective:

"To give the supervisor the tools that he or she needs to do their jobs effectively, productively and profitably."

The methodology is simple and straightforward. We give supervisors information and managerial techniques which they can, and will, begin to use the minute they leave the training session.

Philosophically, we have set up our programs to be viewed by the first-line supervisor from a totally selfish perspective:

"Simply put, if you, as a supervisor, will follow the procedures outlined in our programs, your jobs will become easier and more enjoyable to you."

Furthermore, WCIRA appreciates the fact that each one of the supervisors or managers we train, spends at least one-half of his/her waking hours either getting ready to go to work, at work, going home from work, or recovering from being at work.

With this type of significant commitment to his job, it only makes sense to make the supervisor's relationship as meaningful and productive as possible.

To that end, WCIRA offers fourteen major supervisory and managerial training courses which accomplish the following primary and secondary objectives:

1. Provide supervisors with key managerial tools.
2. Strengthen philosophically the supervisors' understanding of what his/her role is within the company, and helps to increase their identification with management.
3. Increase the supervisors' awareness of his/her peers' problems, strengths, and weaknesses because they allow for cross-communications between participants during these training sessions.
4. Because of their structure, WCIRA programs require supervisors to demonstrate in a classroom situation both conceptual and practical understanding of our key management techniques.
5. Increase productivity, profitability and protect the employer from various litigation which may result from poor or inappropriate supervisory practices.
6. Help prepare the supervisors to grow as the company grows, so that supervisors and managers will be capable of handling new or expanded responsibilities.

All of our WCIRA programs can be tailor-made to suit the needs and sophistication levels of your particular supervisory work force.

They do not represent a shotgun approach to training. They are, however, specialized encounters within small groups designed to effect or facilitate progressive management changes over a predetermined period of time.

In summary, we provide a nuts and bolts approach to management training and development. Our training staff shares many years of personnel, line management and professional training experience. We know our business. We are professionals, and we accomplish our objectives.

It is our sincere hope that we can help you facilitate a brighter future for your organization.

Professional service is our product, and I am confident that each of our staff specialists will be pleased to provide you with the service that is commensurate with your expectations.

# **Program Introduction**

The Role of the Supervisor is an in-depth professional, supervisory, and managerial training program designed to be optimally utilized in its entirety in a one-year timeframe.

The fourteen courses outlined in this syllabus are typically chosen to be presented one per month, for a period of twelve months.

The employer, along with a West Coast Training Consultant, will determine which twelve out of the fourteen programs should be presented and in which order.

WCIRA attempts to tailor its training packages to suit the particular needs of various clients. Therefore, we have included a number of additional training courses to allow the employer the flexibility of choice.

## **Number of Participants Per Course**

The Role of the Supervisor program is arranged in such a fashion to allow for a unique combination of lecture and employee participation. Throughout the program, employees are assigned to playing roles which validate the learning principles encompassed within the lecture material.

In order to provide a reasonable amount of individual attention to the participants while they are going through the various managerial courses in the program, we have found that the courses should be limited to 9-15 participants.

We have run our program for as many as 200 supervisors at one time, but we have found that it is extremely difficult to adequately address all of the subject-related questions which occur in larger groups.

## **Organizational Levels and Communications**

As was stated earlier, one of the principal assets in any well-run training program is that the participants feel free to ask pertinent questions and to have those questions properly addressed by the program leader.

In order to foster this upward communications process, it is particularly beneficial not to mix levels of management within a particular training course.

By following this rule of thumb, participants are more likely to get their specific problems out and on the table where they can be judiciously dealt with by the program leader.

## **The Program Design — Tailor-made**

At various times throughout the program, participants will be provided with the opportunity to read, watch video tapes, role play on video tapes, analyze management cases, and practice and refine managerial skills through small group activities.

As noted earlier, a very important part of the program is to provide the individual supervisor or manager with the opportunity to exchange experiences and information with others on a similar managerial level.

WCIRA will take the existing role plays, which are indigenous to our program, and re-write them using the same concepts, but integrating them into the existing organizational framework of your particular company.

This tailor-made approach makes WCIRA's management program the most unique in the industry.

## **Training the Trainer**

Depending upon your existing inhouse training capabilities and expertise, you may decide to simply purchase our entire training package and have your own people do the training themselves.

To that end, we run a four-day seminar devoted to training the trainers.

# The Role of the Supervisor

## Course Description

This unit should be considered the foundation for the program that follows. It deals primarily with defining what the supervisor is specifically responsible for and to whom he/she is responsible.

This section begins with a discussion of what we call "umbrella concepts." These central concepts lead to further discussion and analysis in the units that follow.

Once we have discussed what the supervisor is, and what he/she is responsible for, then the program that follows will discuss what tools the supervisor has at his/her disposal to meet their responsibilities.

The ten central issues addressed are as follows:

1. The Supervisor as a member of management.
2. The Supervisor is responsible for output regardless of his/her input.
3. The Supervisor is responsible for the "care and feeding" of his/her employees.
4. The Supervisor is responsible for upholding company policies and procedures.
5. The Supervisor is responsible for being informed.
6. The Supervisor is responsible for communications to his/her peers, superiors and subordinates.
7. The Supervisor must be an active team member.
8. The Supervisor is responsible for "making it happen" and achieving desired and predictable results.
9. The Supervisor is responsible for taking risks and exercising independent judgment.
10. The Supervisor is responsible for being dissatisfied and employing methods and means through creative management processes to reduce his/her dissatisfaction levels.

## Course Objective

To define, and in some cases simply clarify, what exactly is the role of the supervisor.

Once we have made the participants comfortable with what they are supposed to be, then we can begin to discuss methods of management.

# Interviewing and Selection

## Course Description

This unit is a key in any organization where the first-line supervisors have direct input into the hiring process.

The Interviewing and Selection Course is designed to demonstrate, in no uncertain or ambiguous terms, the importance of the hiring process.

We trace each step of the employment process from receipt of the application or resumé, through the interviewing process, to the checking of references.

Particular emphasis is placed on EEOC considerations during the interview process.

Added attention is given to:

1. Proper questioning techniques.
2. What to look for in supervisory and non-supervisory candidates.
3. Hiring over or under qualified employees.
4. Panic hiring.
5. The Salvation Army approach to hiring, ie., hiring someone simply because you feel sorry for them.

Live video-taping is used as supervisors are put through more than two hours of extensive role plays.

By using the video process, your supervisors and managers are able to see firsthand exactly how they perform during an interview, and illustrate the common mistakes which can be made during the interviewing process.

## Course Objectives

Our goals in this unit are to:

1. Convince supervisors of the importance of selecting the right employee in order to cut down on turnover, lower the company training costs, upgrade the employee workforce, and increase the total productivity and profitability.
2. Make supervisors more comfortable with the interviewing process itself by putting them through difficult participative role plays. We convince supervisors that if they can get through our interviewing role plays, they can get through any real life interview situation.

# **Discipline and Discharge**

## **Course Description**

This unit is designed to attack in very pragmatic terms the philosophy and the proper process involved in effective disciplinary action.

Various role plays are used in this program to visibly demonstrate which corrective step to use and when to initiate corrective action.

Special attention is given to the following areas:

1. The definition of discipline.
2. The definition of progressive discipline.
3. Discipline as a positive supervisory tool.
4. The need for corrective action.
5. Proper documentation.
6. The difference between employee counseling and corrective disciplinary action.
7. The verbal warning process.
8. The written warning process.
9. The final written warning process.
10. When to suspend an employee.
11. The discharge process.
12. Just cause for discipline.

## **Course Objective**

To convince supervisors that disciplinary action is a positive tool which they must utilize to protect the welfare of the workforce in total.

Once we have sold the supervisors on this concept, we spend a good deal of time working with the participants on proper documentation procedures and the principles of consistent disciplinary policies.

# Managing the Marginal Employee

## Course Description

This unit treats the ever-present problems involved in attempting to supervise marginal employees, and how to make decisions relative to their continued employment. Topics covered in this unit include:

1. The definition of the marginal employee.
2. How these marginal employees will negatively affect the attitudes of other employees in his/her work group.
3. The supervisors need to take charge of this situation and to make the decision whether to save or sever this employee.
4. The "How To" approach when determining what to do with the marginal employee.
5. Three role plays designed to demonstrate to the supervisors the twelve key conditions or variables that must be considered when making a decision about the marginal employee.
6. How to implement corrective action.

## Course Objective

To get supervisors to confront the marginal employee situation, and to take educated action relative to these employees.

Simply put, the intent of this unit is to get the supervisor to determine whether these employees are worth saving, and if so, what strategy should be developed to produce the desired results. Or, if these employees should be terminated, what procedures should be employed to that end.

The final overriding objective in this unit is to illustrate how to up-grade the work force.

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# Motivation

## Course Description

This unit introduces the supervisor to the latest ideas in motivating employees, strategies for handling employee motivation on an individual subordinate basis, and techniques for implementing motivation programs. Methods for motivating employees without creating new problems or side effects, and benefits of carefully planned strategies are stressed in terms of employee performance payoffs. Subjects discussed include:

1. Definition of motivation . . . why differences exist in what motivates employees and supervisors.
2. How to avoid pitfalls in motivating employees.
3. How to recognize and avoid rewarding negative employee behavior.
4. Selecting the right rewards for the right person . . . the key to effective motivation strategies.
5. Planning, not hip shooting, methods for motivation with:
  - a. The peaked out senior employee.
  - b. The overly aggressive junior employee.
  - c. The confused, wheel-spinning new employee.
6. Motivation and income.
7. Motivation and benefits.
8. Motivation and the employee's stage of work career.
9. The stick and carrot approach.
10. Competition . . . under what conditions is competition a motivator, and where is it a de-motivator.
11. Rewards . . . how to truly motivate employees, versus just eliminating those things that are distracting their attention from work.

## Course Objective

To get the supervisor away from looking at their employees as just people working for a paycheck. Pay is important, but not everything. The employee is viewed as an individual with individual needs. The supervisor learns the strategies and tactics for motivating without promoting, raising salaries/benefits, or transfers.

# Management by Objectives

## Course Description

This unit illustrates different concepts of goal setting, how to introduce objectives to employees, what type and how much participation employees should have in setting objectives, and the benefits of objective setting to employee productivity and performance improvement. Areas covered include:

1. The eight key steps in setting objectives.
2. How to keep the system of setting objectives from getting too cumbersome.
3. Tying MBO to the supervisors' and employees' job descriptions.
4. Effective time management . . . the foundation of a high impact MBO system.
5. How the supervisor can use MBO as a performance appraisal, productivity, and improvement technique.
6. How to spot those activities providing supervision and employees their biggest performance payoff.
7. How to use MBO for supervisor/employee team building.
8. How to avoid the "big time wasters" and get down to the performance basics.
9. Short-term objectives . . . the key to long-term results . . . different type standards.
10. How to set performance
  - a. Routine
  - b. Problem solving
  - c. Innovation

## Course Objective

To move supervisors away from their activity traps and focus more on employee performance. The WCIRA MBO approach shows the supervisor how to avoid personality characteristics or political pitfalls in setting performance standards for employees. A major result of this unit is that supervisors learn how to set challenging, but realistic standards, a key element in employee productivity.

# Communications and Problem Solving

## Course Description

WCIRA's approach to communications and problem solving (CPS) uses the latest techniques in behavior modeling (showing the wrong way to handle communications, the right way, and letting the supervisor practice the right way) to improve the supervisor's employee relations skills. Supervisors learn the most effective methods of drawing out employees, getting their most productive ideas, and the benefits of joint cooperative supervisor/subordinate problem solving. Areas of instruction include:

1. How to control discussions without dominating the conversation or turning-off employees.
2. How to handle the excessive talker.
3. How to draw-out the quiet employee.
4. Handling confrontations with employees who put you on the spot.
5. How to handle discussions when the supervisor loses control.
6. How to handle emotional employees.
7. How, and when, supervisors should assert themselves.
8. Two simple steps to cut down supervisory/employee misunderstandings.
9. How to run effective departmental meetings.
10. How to install company-wide employee/management communication programs and techniques for ventilating employees.

## Course Objective

To convince the supervisors that open communications are a major device for maintaining high employee performance. This unit provides each participant with the tools to handle a wide variety of employee relations problems. The skillful running of departmental meetings can get more accomplished and reduce the amount of time normally required for these activities. Knowing how to handle ventilation meetings is important to all levels of supervision and helps reduce major morale problems from growing and spreading throughout the organization. The supervisor leaves this session knowing that interpersonal communication skills are the foundation of high performance.

# Training and Orientation

## Course Description

Proper indoctrination and orientation is essential when bringing new employees into the workforce, because what an employee learns and how he/she is treated initially will establish their attitude and their perception of the organization for years to come. Areas covered include:

1. The role of the supervisor in orienting new employees.
2. What an employee needs to know their first day on the job.
3. The typical role of the Personnel Department in assisting with orientation procedures.
4. What are the most critical policies and procedures to be covered the first day on the job?
5. What about safety?
6. Insurance benefits?
7. Job descriptions.
8. Employee start-up sheets.
9. Employee follow-up procedures.
10. Who should initially instruct the new employee as far as actual on-the-job training is concerned?
11. When is it timely to review how well an employee is fitting into the system?
12. What actions should be taken by the supervisor if the new employee is not adapting well?

## Course Objective

To impress upon the supervisor the long lasting impression which the first several days will have on new employees and then to give the supervisor the tools that he/she can use in order to properly orient and follow-up on the progress of new employees.

# **Productivity**

## **Course Description**

Many supervisory training programs tend to overlook the role of the supervisor as far as productivity is concerned.

This unit is designed to illustrate the responsibilities inherent in the productivity, or results oriented, systems within which most supervisors operate.

The tack which we take in this unit is predicated on human relations concepts as a direct means to the desired results of increased productivity. Areas covered include:

1. What does productivity mean?
2. The supervisor must learn to work smarter, not harder.
3. How can I compute output?
4. What does Out-Put-Per Direct-Labor Manhour mean?
5. How can interdepartmental competition help improve productivity?
6. What types of reinforcement should I use in order to positively motivate my employees to get the job done?

## **Course Objective**

To convince the supervisor that he/she has the responsibility to affect, and to a certain extent, control productivity and profitability.

Tools, techniques, and demonstrations are provided which will show the supervisor how to increase the effectiveness and efficiencies of his/her workforce.

# Counseling

## Course Description

This unit of the WCIRA multi-stage management training program focuses on the role of the supervisor in handling everyday counseling problems, determining employee counseling needs, and the usefulness of a proper counseling approach in preventing subordinate problems from deteriorating into marginal employees, discipline and possible termination. Topics covered in this unit include:

1. Why is counseling of employees part of the supervisor's job?
2. The benefits of early counseling in preventing further problems.
3. The role of the supervisor as a sounding board for employees.
4. Counseling as a form of upward communication.
5. Counseling and documentation . . . the importance of recording potential problems.
6. How to increase employee job performance through effective counseling.
7. Direct, structured counseling techniques, and when to use them.
8. Indirect, unstructured counseling approaches, and their appropriate application.
9. Counseling and reprimands . . . the thin line.

## Course Objective

The purpose of the counseling segment is not to turn supervisors into psychologists or social workers, but to help them become more effective at listening, talking and understanding the employee's point of view. Counseling is a special form of communication that can help the supervisor develop the trust and confidence of employees, thereby improving performance and motivation.

# Maintaining Your Non-union Status

## Course Description

This unit is designed to provide the supervisors with meaningful information which will allow them to take those preventative steps necessary to minimize the risk of unionization. There are additional pointers explained in laymen's language on what the supervisor can and cannot do in the event you face a union organizational effort.

Because of current labor legislation, and a pro-labor National Labor Relations Board, you won't have the time you used to have for solving problems between the time a union petition is filed and an election takes place. Prevention in the form of training, good personnel policies and practices, and a good two-way communications network will be vital to maintaining your union-free status in the future. Selection of new employees, and retention of employees already on board, will also have to be done on a more sophisticated basis.

If preventive programs are not established *now* you may well wind up with a new managing partner, a Union! With the competitive problems employers face today, and a Union around to substantially raise your cost of operation and infringe on your management prerogatives, an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Areas covered in this unit are outlined as follows:

### I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Trends in Organizing
- B. How Organizing Begins
  - 1. Union Initiated
    - a. Locational reasons
    - b. Industry reasons
  - 2. Employee Initiated

### II. CONDITIONS THAT CAUSE UNIONS

- A. Poor Communications Up and Down
  - 1. Downward Communications
    - a. Things that affect an employee's job.
      - (1) Automation, new managers, changes in means, methods and materials of production, rules and regulations, promotional opportunities, etc.

- b. Things about the company
      - (1) New products, productivity and profits, new facilities, etc.
    - c. Personnel policies, procedures, rules and regulations that affect the employee.
    - d. Management credibility and concern.
  - 2. Upward Communications
    - a. Systematic means for listening to employees.
      - (1) Communication meetings, personal interviews at six-month intervals, etc.
    - b. Day to day listening to employees.
      - (1) Supervisor, personnel manager, other members of management, etc.
- B. Inept Supervision-Selection/Training/Supervisor's Needs
  - 1. Selecting supervisors with technical skill, good production records, etc., rather than on leadership qualities.
  - 2. Supervisory Training.
    - a. Treating employees with dignity and respect (human relations skills), avoid favoritism.
    - b. Fairness, firmness and consistency.
    - c. Individual differences in people.
    - d. Handling discipline situations.
    - e. Policies, procedures, rules and regulations, fringe benefits, compensation guides.
    - f. Keeps promises/understands need for feedback.
  - 3. Supervisor's Needs.
    - a. Informed first . . . doesn't need to rely on grapevine.
    - b. Instruction in policies, procedures, fringe benefits, human relations skills, etc.
    - c. Not being put in short pants.
- C. Insecurity
  - 1. Seniority . . . layoffs/recalls/shifts/work schedules/promotions/etc.
  - 2. Grievance Procedure.
  - 3. Discipline Procedure.
  - 4. Layoffs . . . automation/production planning/etc.
  - 5. Stabilized work schedules.
- D. Selection/Orientation/Promotion/Terminations
  - 1. Checking employee's previous work record . . . especially the employee's attitude.
  - 2. Avoid hiring applicants

- a. Who are over-qualified.
  - b. Who would take a cut in pay.
  - c. Who have unrealistic wage and promotion expectations.
  - d. Who show signs of egomania/paranoia/immaturity/etc.
  - e. Who have deep personal problems (debt, dope, alcohol, etc.)
  - f. Who have poor attendance records at school or with previous employers.
- 3. Proper use of orientation program and probationary period.
  - 4. Failure to make real effort to fill job openings from within.
    - a. Failure to review jobs for upgrading when there are changes in means, methods and/or materials, etc.
  - 5. The use of exit interviews with terminating employees.
- E. Wage and Benefits (the Negative Motivators)
- 1. Wages
    - a. Competitiveness in community/region
    - b. Automatic progression vs. merit
    - c. Proper supervisory administration of program.
    - d. Develop trusted means for convincing employees of fairness of wage program.
  - 2. Benefits
    - a. Competitiveness in community/region.
    - b. Benefit administration and morale problems associated with poor administration.
    - c. Factors to consider when designing a benefit program.
      - (1) Coverage exceptions vs. deductible with no exceptions.
      - (2) Administration.
      - (3) Employer contribution level.
    - d. Effectively communicating benefits.
- F. Working Conditions
- 1. Clean restrooms, cafeteria, etc.
  - 2. Ventilation, dust, noise, sanitation, etc.

## **Course Objective**

To identify those factors which will cause union activity, and to convince supervisors that they are the key in controlling this type of activity.



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