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# Stellar Supervision Enhances Company Productivity

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As a leader, you have probably asked yourself these questions.

"Why is it that a wide range of personnel training programs I've experienced over the years we're supposed to enhance human performance but failed to produce the results hoped for?"

"What can a leader have to do to help staff members improve their skills and contribution to the organization?"

"Are there basic principles that can be learned and applied to more effectively supervise others, or is it a natural capacity a person has or doesn't have?"

Leaders like yourself have persisted in searching for answers to these questions for years. Management trends have appeared and disappeared. Personnel have been hired, fired, and others rehired. All to increase human productivity and the organization's profitability, stability and longevity.

One of the most perplexing problems facing employers is how to effectively evaluate the contributions of employees at all levels within the organization. To this time, no one has come up with a foolproof evaluation tool to scientifically rate the day to day application of a person's character, competencies and motivated commitment to resulting productivity outcomes in a non-biased manner.

Researchers have, however, systematically analyzed the developmental aspects of supervising other people as well as the learning aspects of receiving supervision.

I urge leaders to apply this research by incorporating observation, conferring and coaching process into their supervision practices to yield excellent performance enhancement results. These processes call for skills that enable those who lead others, at any level within any kind of organization, to assist staff members in identifying, recognizing, and gaining the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to achieve excellent performance in the position they are responsible for filling.

Ideally, a stellar, proactive supervision process should begin immediately after a person is hired. It should be carried out as often as necessary to gain and maintain optimum personal performance. It should occur several times before a formal evaluation conference or written performance appraisal is conducted.

How does an effective supervision process work and what are the main elements? One of the critical competencies supporting a stellar supervision process is the ability to analyze and write down the specific, incremental tasks needing completion in order for work goals to be achieved.

The standard or quality level for each task must also be identified and spelled out in writing.

The second competency is the skill to observe, with "eyes to see, ears to hear and a heart to feel," what the staff member is doing in the work environment and how they are doing it. Often leaders make false assumptions about what their people are actually doing or do not know themselves what functions and tasks the position entails, nor the criteria for quality performance, nor how to observe or inquire effectively about what is happening in the work setting.

The third critical competency is the ability to conduct a collaborative, supportive and instructive conference whereby the staff member leaves with the ability to begin doing position-related functions and tasks better than before. This kind of conferring is done in a helping atmosphere.

The fourth competency is coaching, where the leader teaches and coaches the staff member toward enhanced levels of performance. This kind of instructional conference builds trust, positive self esteem, loyalty, a sense of mutual regard, and commitment toward better meeting the goals of the organization.

When planning and conducting a collaborative, instructional type conference, the leader needs a comprehensive set of skills related to promoting learning in other adults. These skills include:

**Designing A Learning Objective For The Conference** - This states in writing what the learning is to be, and the behavior to be exhibited at the end of the conference to indicate that the learning has in fact taken place.

**Outlining The Steps To Achieve The Learning** - People learn something new in incremental steps. These steps must be in the correct order and designed in a way which honors the individual's learning style, values orientation and communications style.

**Establishing Clear Expectations** - At the beginning of the conference, the leader must communicate clearly the purpose of the conference and the learning and behavior to be targeted during the conference. The needs and expectations of both parties should also be clarified at this time.

**Observing The Staff Member's Behavior** - The leader can decide what the staff member needs next if attention is paid to what the person is saying and doing. This means getting the staff member involved in the learning and avoiding the typical trap of being a "telling" rather than coaching type of leader.

**Monitoring And Adjusting** - This follows the observation step of hearing what is said and seeing what is done by the staff member. It is on this data base that the leader adjusts the learning tasks, clarifies for understanding, and makes other changes in the conference plan as required. All decisions are based on how to help the staff member learn what is needed to enhance performance.

**Motivation And Reinforcement**

- During the conference, it is important for the leader to be sensitive to the staff member's personal motivators. Each personality type has different needs to be taken into account as a leader moves the staff member from one task to another in attempting to achieve the conference objective. The same is true when cooperatively setting up a reinforcement schedule for practicing and getting feedback on the new learning in the job setting.

**Closure During The Conference** - If leaders and staff members are to "work smarter, not harder," closure on the new knowledge, skill or attitude is critical before the conference ends. Leaders need to get evidence during the conference that the staff member has conceptual control of the elements being learned. They must also let the staff member demonstrate, in some way during the conference, that they can do any physical or cognitive processes required to practice the new learning with a reasonable degree of accuracy. The ability to perform does not have to be perfect, as long as the person can self check and correct for errors. Too many times people are sent off to practice or do something incorrectly. This leads to wasted time, frustration for all, and low productivity for the organization.

Your staff members most likely represent your largest monetary investment and budget item. They definitely represent your greatest asset in the competitive decade we are in. An investment in stellar supervision and the continuing development of your staff members in the work environment is an investment in your success as a leader as well as the long-term profitability of your enterprise.

Providing stellar supervision is an investment in high morale and loyalty. Your people will appreciate you for helping them enhance their performance. Stellar supervision enhances your people's positive self esteem! It helps them become more competent and capable and make a better contribution! It helps them feel you really care about their personal growth and development!

From a company perspective, stellar supervision is an investment that reduces employee absenteeism and turnover, saving from ten to twenty thousand dollars per person for the hidden and direct costs of advertising, screening, interviewing, orienting and training for most workers and managers new to a position. My hope for you and your enterprise is that you will take the time to learn and apply the skills needed to provide stellar supervision for each of your staff members.

If you need help in mastering and implementing any of the skills and tactics mentioned, I'm here for you! Please visit the Call-A-Coach section of my web site for more information.

## About the author:

Dr. Mac shares with business owners the practical knowledge and insights he gained as a small company CEO. He founded Sycamore Ranch, Inc. when 27 and as CEO led his partners and a staff of 100 for 16 years in developing and operating the 50 acre recreational facility. Years later, he integrated what he learned from his Doctoral program at USC with his practical business experiences and began consulting. For four decades Mac's coached business owners in mastering and applying "how to" leadership and managerial skills for: Hiring and retaining only the top ten percent producers; Optimally deploying and supervising staff to maximize their personal motivation; Developing high integrity leadership teams; Facilitating mutual performance accountability and peer coaching processes; and, Integrating his Intentional Business Integrity Process into their company operations. Mac has served leaders in manufacturing and high tech companies; accounting, banking and insurance enterprises; medical and health care organizations; service and retail oriented businesses; as well as educational, governmental and non profit organizations. Q&A ProActive Leadership 888-648-5552 or MacAdam@PALConsulting

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