



## It's no surprise we fail our supervisors

The very people most directly responsible for employee engagement and operational performance are too often unknowingly and unintentionally set up for failure. If, like many organizations, there is a recognized need to help supervisors be better in their roles, then inquire: Did we hire the right people and inadvertently compromise their effectiveness or hire the wrong people and compromise the effectiveness of the followers?

Congratulations, you are now a supervisor. You know nothing about leadership, what motivates people, how to deal with desirable or undesirable performance issues or how to create an environment that facilitates tapping into discretionary behavior. But that doesn't matter. After all, you were a super employee!

The super employee becoming the supervisor continues to trouble leadership effectiveness. Most supervisors are promoted into their positions without understanding the dynamics of what it means to no longer be a peer but to now oversee your peers, leaving some to fear the transition from friend to foe.

When bringing in a first-line supervisor from outside of the company, is he assessed for his ability to get things done and lead

others to perform at higher outputs? Is the supervisor vetted during the interview process to see if he will not only fit in the culture but also enhance it? Do we want overseers of activity or leaders who inspire groups of people and solicit increased levels of engagement?

Supervisors, when chosen correctly and provided the right skills, can accomplish much more for an organization than simply overseeing activities and results of hourly workers. Any effective leader knows you don't become a great leader by what you do but by what you lead others to accomplish. Where are your supervisors currently? Are they task overseers or those who are able to facilitate performance improvement?

There are a plethora of skills-building opportunities (e.g., accountability, coaching, communication effectiveness, decision making, employment law, empathy, goal setting, labor relations, leading in difficult times, performance management, self-awareness and situational styles). Organizations most successfully approach development efforts strategically by defining what success would look like, identifying where they currently

are against success, and planning for reinforcement accountability and measurements that validate contributed value. Only then are they in a position to choose the best path based on what would most benefit the individuals and organization.

Rather than initially seeking out leadership development opportunities to help your supervisors be the best they can be, first internally agree on what the best looks like. Profile an excellent leader in your organization by characteristics, capabilities and the impressions he leaves with others, creating a desire to be followers. Where are your supervisors and managers against this ideal? Which skills do your leaders already have a firm understanding of and are able to demonstrate competency, and which ones are most needed right now? Without assessing first what they know and can do, how can there be confidence that development opportunities will indeed yield the desired return?

Common demotivators to new leaders are not feeling prepared or supported, and pointless requirements and activities. We fail our front-line leaders when we put them into situations they are not ready for. We

again fail them when we try to develop them without having a plan and supporting initiatives they can see value in, one that actually contributes to their abilities to become successful and experience mastery in their areas of leadership.

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