

# **Taking the Step Up to Supervisor**

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## Introduction

Becoming a supervisor is your first step in the challenging and rewarding field of management. You have earned a new level of responsibility and authority because of your technical skills, attitude, and potential. Now you must master different skills to help you continue to advance and grow. This book will help you do that.

Management is still more art than science; however, the basic skills necessary to succeed have been clearly identified and can be learned. As with any new set of skills, it is best to follow the instructions closely at first. But then, as you gain more confidence, try your own methods and discover what works best for you. This will allow you to develop your ability to its highest level.

Above all, relax and enjoy the challenge. You have reached a significant level of achievement and growth. Now you can watch those whom you supervise achieve and grow and know that you helped them do so. That is one of the greatest rewards of being a supervisor. Good luck!

## About the Author

With 21 years of management experience, Geoff Nichols has built a solid base of knowledge in recruitment, performance management, employment law, training, industrial safety, presentation skills, direct sales, and direct marketing. He has served as a human resources executive in manufacturing, banking, and health care.

As an executive for the world's largest business training organization for 10 years, Mr. Nichols built a staff of trainers, managers, sales representatives, and support personnel that delivered more than 9,000 public and private business seminars each year in the U.S., Canada, and Europe.

As a consultant for the past five years, Mr. Nichols has trained thousands of supervisors, managers, human resource professionals, sales professionals, and executives in all types of industries throughout North America and England. This broad experience plus a B.A. in psychology and an M.S. in industrial safety give Mr. Nichols a strong foundation for helping people be more effective in their jobs.

## Self-Assessment

How do you rate your supervisory ability? This self-assessment will allow you to identify skill areas in which you are strong and those in which you can develop. This will help guide you to the chapters in the book that will provide the quickest and greatest value.

Read each statement and then circle the number that most closely describes your current skill level according the following scale: 1 = Strongly disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Not sure, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly agree. Be honest with yourself as you answer the questions.

1. I am comfortable in the role of a supervisor and understand how I can best carry out all of my duties.      1      2      3      4      5
2. I am able to command respect from everyone I work with in my role as a supervisor.      1      2      3      4      5
3. I know what my employees are looking for from me and their jobs.      1      2      3      4      5
4. I know how to help employees give their best efforts to their jobs.      1      2      3      4      5
5. I know how to get my employees to work together as a team.      1      2      3      4      5
6. I always listen well to understand the other person's viewpoint before I offer mine.      1      2      3      4      5
7. I am always careful to watch what I say and how I speak when talking to others.      1      2      3      4      5
8. I know which words are likely to provoke anger in others.      1      2      3      4      5

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# Chapter *One*

## *Learning Your New Role*

### Chapter Objectives

- ▶ Explain how the supervisor's job differs from that of a nonsupervisor or manager.
- ▶ Become familiar with your new responsibilities as a supervisor and the new personal skills you will need to develop.
- ▶ Anticipate the benefits as well as the typical challenges of being a supervisor.

**D**o you remember when you were hired for your first full-time job? For many of us, it was both exciting and, at the same time, somewhat frightening. It was our first opportunity to demonstrate our abilities and see how we measured up in the “real world.” We soon learned that we could do the job and do it well.

**Becoming a supervisor is much like getting your first job.**

Becoming a supervisor is much like getting that first job. In fact, it is a new and different job! Your responsibility now is not only to do your own tasks, but also to get work done through other people. In a very real way, your success lies in their hands! This can again be exciting and frightening, but you will find that you can do it well and will one day want to step up into management.

The main differences in each of these career steps are the scope and depth of their duties. *Scope* refers to the different kinds of tasks you must do, and *depth* refers to their difficulty and impact on the organization. The higher in the organization you go, the greater the scope and depth of your duties. The diagram on the next page shows how each step differs.

## Comparison of Organizational Roles

### Manager

- Plans work for department.
- Assigns tasks/objectives to supervisors and others.
- Evaluates others' work.
- Sets department policies.
- Sets department budget within given guidelines.
- Has higher impact on organization's success.
- Responsible for results.

### Supervisor

- Plans work for work group.
- Assigns tasks to others.
- Evaluates others' work.
- Carries out policies.
- Meets budget goals.
- Responsible for others' work.

### Nonsupervisor

- Does work that is assigned.
- Has several main responsibilities.
- Exercises limited judgment.
- Evaluated for personal effort.

These are general descriptions of each career step. Different organizations define and title the various levels in their structures differently according to organization size, business, culture, etc. Sometimes one level may have a mix of tasks from higher or lower levels as described above.

Becoming a supervisor for the first time is truly like getting a new job. And with a new job at a higher level, you can expect a new set of benefits and challenges.



## ● Learning Your New Role

**Becoming a supervisor brings with it a wide range of new experiences.**

### Anticipating New Challenges and Benefits

Becoming a supervisor brings with it a wide range of new experiences. Many are very positive and fulfilling, such as:

- ◆ Increased status.
- ◆ Increased authority.
- ◆ Increased compensation.
- ◆ Increased visibility in the organization.
- ◆ Ability to make a more important contribution to the organization.
- ◆ Seeing people grow and earn promotions as a result of your coaching.
- ◆ Satisfaction of leading a team to achieve results.
- ◆ Greater involvement in other areas of the organization.
- ◆ Greater opportunity for personal and professional growth.
- ◆ Greater feelings of success.

You can probably think of other positive effects that are indirect reflections of your new job as supervisor. These might include the ability to buy items you have long wanted or to make progress toward your financial goals. Or they may be more personal, such as the look of pride you see in your family's eyes as they see you make progress in life.



#### Take a Moment

Write down what your new job as a supervisor means to you. This is a personal celebration of your accomplishment and a letter to yourself that you can look back on in the future. It's your time to recognize yourself!

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As you take each new step in your career, remember to take some time to celebrate your success. This will help bring even more enjoyment to your achievements. It will also give you confidence as you approach new responsibilities.

### **Acquiring New Responsibilities and Skills**

Some of your new responsibilities are similar to what you did before you became supervisor, but many are very different. Up to now, you have been responsible for developing your technical skills, assuring the quality your own work, and working well with others. From this point forward, you are faced with additional responsibilities that include:

- ◆ Coaching and motivating employees.
- ◆ Getting employees to work together as a team.
- ◆ Solving problems with others.
- ◆ Managing conflicts between others.
- ◆ Counseling and disciplining.
- ◆ Managing your time as well as that of others.
- ◆ Conducting meetings.
- ◆ Dealing with your stress and the stress of others.

These new responsibilities can be trying. In Chapter 8, we will discuss ways to deal effectively with stress; however, there are some unique challenges to being a new supervisor that we should address. Following are four of the most common challenges many new supervisors face and suggestions to help resolve the issues. Take a moment to review the list and highlight phrases that will help you.

## ● Learning Your New Role

### Challenge

- ◆ Feeling overwhelmed

- ◆ Jealousy from former coworkers

### Suggestion

- ◆ Identify specifically what the issues are that seem too large and write them down. Analyze them to see if training or better time management will help or if something else is the problem. Look at both personal and organizational issues. Talk with your manager or some other experienced person who can offer advice. Understand that this is a common feeling for new supervisors.
- ◆ Realize that it really is not personal. They would be jealous of anyone who took your job. Try asking for their opinions. If they seem resistant, talk with them individually and bring up the issue. Recognize their abilities and ask for their support. Be friendly, but don't try too hard. If they do not lessen their unpleasant behavior, document it. If it becomes disruptive, you may have to begin counseling and discipline.