

PERSONNEL RESPONSIBILITIES

Understanding Employees

The most important and valuable resource the supervisor works with and manages is people—employees. No matter what position an employee occupies in an organization, his work is important to the proper functioning of the whole. The impact of his needs, wants, wishes, goals and ambitions must be recognized. His problems—personal and official—that affect his physical, emotional and social well being must be understood to intelligently solve the many problems of human relations that occur each day. The supervisor must have a genuine interest in people and strive to improve his understanding of what makes people, as individuals and in groups, act as they do, and learn to use this understanding to increase the effectiveness of his organization. The purpose of this Guide is to summarize some of the fundamental factors that influence group and individual human behavior. The better the supervisor understands these factors, the better he will be able to cope with the problems that arise in working with others.

PRINCIPLES OF HUMAN BEHAVIOR

All people are alike in many respects; they all have intellectual faculties: they all learn, remember and make judgments; they all have senses such as they can see, hear, feel, smell and taste; they all have emotions such as love, hate, anger, fear and joy; in short, they are all human.

It is also true that each person is unique and different from every other individual. The individual is a result of one of the infinite possible combinations of inherited traits or qualities, his environment, and his experiences. He is a product of what he was born with as modified by all that has happened to him in life. Some of the things that make up the combination are discussed below.

The Basic Characteristics

Each individual has an original nature—his inborn or hereditary characteristics—body build; color of skin, hair and eyes, attractive or unattractive—as well as mental characteristics—intelligence and aptitudes. Each person also lives in a cultural environment which varies a great deal from individual to individual. In this environment each person has experiences which are unique to him—physical care, educational opportunities, emotional development, attitude formation.

These factors that determine human development and behavior—heredity, environment and experience—do not exist separate and apart from each other. They interact—affect and are affected by each other:

1. The original nature may limit or prevent realization of maximum benefit from the environment of experiences.
2. The environment may limit or prevent the realization of

- maximum benefit from the original nature or experience.
3. The unique experiences may limit or prevent the realization of maximum benefit from the environment and original nature.

As an individual's original nature is subjected to his environment and his experiences, and the interaction of those, he becomes fashioned into a social being—the person, the individual personality. Each individual's original nature, experiences, environment and the interaction of those are different which causes each person to be different. This process of becoming a social being or person is called socialization. Most of the socialization process and the changes in the individual it brings about are a result of learning.

The Basic Drives

The human being is an extremely complex organism, but complex as he is, certain basic drives tend to govern his actions; tend to give him a cause for what he does; tend to motivate him. Some of these basic drives or needs are:

1. The need for food, drink and shelter.
2. The need for sexual satisfaction.
3. The need for activity and new experiences.
4. The need for companionship, belonging, and recognition.

These basic drives do not change but expression of them is modified, conditioned or changed through experience and learning. Satisfaction of these drives or needs is a never ending process. The individual's whole life is spent in trying to satisfy his various needs. The direction of his behavior is determined by the many pressures, at work and away from work, that his needs exert on him. Some of these needs are more important than others; which is more important varies with each individual or situation. This has been illustrated by the "hierarchy of needs" as follows:

1. Physical needs relate to food, drink and shelter. Generally, when these needs are met adequately they become less important and effective as motivators.
2. Safety or security needs encompass such things as belonging, companionship, order, stability, fairness. If the individual encounters unfair decisions, discrimination and changes he cannot understand, he will regard these actions as threats to his safety and security.
3. Social needs are those that deal with recognition, belonging and new experiences. Many of these are met through friends, groups and being accepted at work and away from work.
4. Ego needs relate to wishes for status, recognition and self-respect.

5. Self-fulfillment needs relate to doing something really worthwhile, accomplishing and creating on a high personal level, meeting personal goals and ambitions.

For the supervisor these ideas relating to the needs of the employees are very important because they become the basis for motivation. The different levels of needs imply the following:

1. Generally, a lower need must be satisfied before the next higher one is effective as a motivator.
2. As the one need is satisfied, others gain in importance.
3. The higher level needs are the best motivators because they are never fully met.

These Guides should help the supervisor in determining his employee's needs and in motivating them by showing, assigning and assisting them to do work that will contribute to the satisfaction of the needs.

ATTITUDES

The individual acts in response to stimuli from his drives which have been tempered by socialization. But this does not explain why people develop likes and dislikes, attractions and repulsions, interests and apathies toward so many persons, stimuli and things. These are largely determined by the attitudes, or tendencies of the individual to act in a certain way. The decisions and actions of the individual are determined by the force of these attitudes. The influence an attitude has on the individual depends on its degree or intensity.

The attitudes of an individual are learned. Usually they are accumulated gradually over a long period of time. They are learned from specific experiences, from instruction at home, work and school, and from observing others. After an attitude is formed the person tends to generalize from this—or to stereotype—and see other similar things, or situations in the same way as the ones which caused the attitude. These attitudes and stereotypes often do not reflect reality. They may be the basis for unfounded prejudices and unwarranted discrimination.

The supervisor must also keep in mind that each person has a pattern of attitudes about himself. Each person, through his imagination, takes a position as if he were outside his own personality, and from this assumed position observes his personality as if he were someone else, or imagines what others see about him. On the basis of what he thinks others believe about him, the individual forms attitudes about himself. People generally have a fairly accurate picture of themselves. However, errors are made. If one underestimates himself, he tends to have feelings of inferiority, or if he overrates himself, he may have feelings of superiority.

The function of attitudes and beliefs is to orient the individual toward reality or what he believes to be reality. They help to plan for the future, anticipate other people and situations, or help attain goals or avoid threats. Once attitudes are formed—right or wrong—it is very difficult to change them.

WISHES AND THEIR FRUSTRATION

Much human behavior is orientated toward the future—hopes, aims, ambitions, plans or wishes. These wishes are based on the desire to satisfy some need of the individual. They anticipate future satisfaction of the need and involve the acceptance of a goal, belief in the probability of its attainment, and

a modification of behavior to facilitate the realization of the goal. The goal of wishes is largely determined by attitudes, values and the accepted practices or customs of the society in which the individual lives.

The individual may be completely wrong about his ability to attain the goal of his wish, but it will seem attainable to him whether it is or not. If a person's wish goal is blocked so that he realizes that it will not be attained, he is frustrated. There are several typical patterns of adjustment which the individual makes to the fact of frustration. Some of these are so common that they have become known by standardized terms. They are:

1. Aggression. Aggression may take the form of fighting back at the object, person or thing that causes the frustration. More commonly it takes the form of "taking it out on another" or taking another goal to replace the one not attainable.
2. Compensation. People frequently compensate in the form of adding energy and effort toward some new or substituted goal. The new goal may have been taken because it was necessary to substitute one goal for another or because the new goal was more acceptable to employers, fellow workers, family or society.
3. Rationalization. Rationalization is giving acceptable reasons for some act or failure to act which is considered by the individual to be blameworthy or wrong. This may take the form of denying that one ever wanted the goal not attained or attempting to blame failure on minor or non-existent reasons. It may also take the form of admitting failure or fault but justifying it by pointing out that others do the same or worse things.
4. Delusions. Delusion is a fabrication of fact which is used as the basis for the individual's belief. This takes the form of "my" supervisor had it in for "me" or accusing an innocent third party for causing the failure.
5. Negativism. This is sometimes called the "balky horse" mechanism. The individual opposes whatever he thinks people want or expect him to do. The individual tends to get satisfaction from not acting as expected.
6. Fantasy or Day Dreaming. If the individual's goals are blocked, he may engage in fantasy which allows him to accomplish and enjoy them in his imagination.
7. Identification. Identification takes the form of the individual's identifying himself with or living through the lives of others. He participates vicariously in the successes of others. This is often done in movies, from reading books and by parents through their children.
8. Repression. Repression involves pushing the unpleasant and frustrating reality of the present into the unconscious mind and acting as if it does not exist. The individual is given relief from pain by a denial of or refusal to face the facts.
9. Regression. This involves a retreat from the unpleasant realities of the present to an earlier, simpler and happier form of behavior. It takes the form of reliving times that have gone by.

THE SOCIAL PROCESSES

The supervisor must keep in mind that an understanding of the individual is important to working with people. He must also keep in mind that individuals form groups of all kinds such as the family, clubs, unions, professional associations,

car pools, work groups and many, many others. The activities of the individual and his participation in these groups make an understanding of group processes very important to the supervisor's success.

Some of the more important of the group processes are:

1. **Contact.** Contact refers to all forms of communication by which two persons are placed in a position in which one may influence the other. It may be personal contact, reading what someone else has written, or listening to radio or TV.
2. **Interaction.** Interaction occurs as a common experience in which two or more individuals, in a reciprocal relationship, contribute and from which each extracts something. This is the process by which exchange of information and experience takes place.
3. **Suggestion.** Suggestion is an important form of interaction in which the individual either consciously or unconsciously responds to some stimulation so that he accepts without critical understanding or adequate advice what those about him think or feel.
4. **Imitation.** This comes about from contact and interaction. Imitation occurs when the activities of one individual or group awakens a desire, need or impulse in others to do the same. The impulse may be conscious or unconscious and may be based on a need to be like others or just to "keep up with the Joneses".
5. **Communication.** Communication is the process by which there is a transfer of emotion, feelings, or other information. This closely relates to contact and interaction. This may take place in other forms but the most common ones are written and spoken word.
6. **Competition.** This is caused by the fact that there is a limited quantity or opportunity for securing something of value. It may be competition for money, success, fame, to win a game or many other things.
7. **Cooperation.** Cooperation occurs when two or more individuals or groups jointly accept and work toward the accomplishment of a goal. Cooperation makes it possible for two individuals or groups to more efficiently accomplish some goal that one could not do alone.
8. **Conflict.** Conflict refers to a process situation in which two or more persons or groups actively seek to thwart each others purposes and interests. Conflict may vary in degree, may be organized or unorganized, may be transitory or enduring, and may be physical or intellectual.
9. **Accommodation.** Accommodation involves a permanent or temporary termination of rivalry which, while not always settling the issue involved, permits the parties to function together without open hostility.
10. **Assimilation.** Assimilation is a gradual process whereby differences and rivalries become integrated and tend to disappear. This may occur because one individual or group becomes overwhelmingly stronger than the other and there is no longer any basis for effective rivalry, or because the rivalry declines, or people change locations or change their minds.

THE SUPERVISOR MUST UNDERSTAND HIMSELF

It goes without saying that, if the supervisor is going to understand and get along with others he must understand and get along with himself. If he does not have proper attitudes and confidence in his own capacities and abilities, he cannot have

a proper respect for others. The following are some of the attitudes and feelings the supervisor should have. They are the foundations to good human relations.

1. **With himself, the supervisor should:**
 - a. **Learn and develop self-understanding.** He should not be self-deprecating, have intense feelings of inferiority, nor be overdemanding of his own capacities. He should understand his own drives and needs.
 - b. **Learn to respect himself.** He should recognize that he is not perfect and be willing to forgive. He must appreciate his own good qualities and be proud of his accomplishments.
 - c. **Care for himself.** He must avoid overindulgence, develop healthful habits and improve his knowledge and skills.
 - d. **Accept and trust himself.** He should understand his shortcomings and accomplishments; know that undesirable attitudes and actions can be changed and improved.
2. **With others, the supervisor should:**
 - a. **Learn to recognize, accept and understand his feelings toward others.** The supervisor should remember his attitudes and prejudices, avoid discrimination, and be objective.
 - b. **Learn to accept and understand people as they are.**
 - c. **Respect the other person's personality and uniqueness.**
 - d. **Help people attain their goals and objectives.** The supervisor must know his employees, understand their wants and needs, help them find satisfaction of their needs, and use every method feasible for developing them to their greatest potential.

The supervisor is sometimes confronted with employees who do not respond to his supervisory efforts or who show some extreme forms of behavior that a layman cannot figure out. These employees are the job for a specialist. Supervisors must recognize that they cannot know all there is to know about people, and when extreme behavior is recognized, get expert help to handle it.

THE SUPERVISOR MUST PROVIDE LEADERSHIP

The ability of the supervisor to understand and work effectively with his employees and those with whom he has contact will largely determine his success or failure. One of the most important factors that will contribute to the success of the supervisor in all that he does is the possession and utilization of the qualities of leadership. Some of these qualities are:

1. **Being knowledgeable about people and his work.**
2. **Possessing self-confidence.**
3. **Emphasizing strong and continuous action.**
4. **Being oriented to the future.**
5. **Cooperating with the inevitable.**
6. **Possessing objective attitudes.**
7. **Having a capacity for simplicity.**
8. **Utilizing a capacity to make decisions.**
9. **Assuming and maintaining initiative.**
10. **Willing to take adverse action when needed.**
11. **Having the ability to stand pressure.**
12. **Being firm in matters of principle.**
13. **Possessing the ability to "bring out the best" in people.**

COUNSELLING WITH EMPLOYEES

If the supervisor's knowledge and understanding of employees, and his leadership abilities are to be of value they must be used. The following are some suggested ways or guides for use of this information.

Cautions in Counselling

Effective and constructive discussion with an individual requires that the supervisor keep certain guidelines in mind. The supervisor should:

1. Listen attentively and politely.
2. Let the employee express his ideas freely.
3. Keep the discussion "on the track" and firmly guide it.
4. Be calm and patient.
5. Show the employee where there is agreement before pointing out differences.
6. Show respect for opinions of the employee.
7. Create the impression of fairness and open-mindedness.
8. Be willing to change his judgment in the light of new evidence.
9. Permit the employee to "save face," stress his strong points.
10. Discuss best methods of avoiding future mistakes.
11. Discuss the employee's work in relation to job duties.
12. Take the blame for a performance failure if in any way his fault.
13. Jointly develop a plan for the improvement of the employee.

Handling Supervisory Problems

Ideally trouble should be spotted and handled before it becomes a problem. However, this cannot always be done; the supervisor will be called upon to handle many different kinds of personnel problems. Sometimes he may be at a loss as to which kind of approach to take. The following outline of steps to take should provide some guidance. The supervisor should:

1. Get the Facts
 - a. Review the record.
 - b. Find out what rules and customs apply.

- c. Talk with individuals concerned.
- d. Get opinions and feelings.
- e. Be sure to get the whole story.

2. Weigh and Decide

- a. Fit the facts together.
- b. Consider their bearing on each other.
- c. Check practices and policies.
- d. What possible actions are there?
- e. Consider effect on the individual, the group, and production.
- f. Do not jump at conclusions.

3. Take Action

- a. Can the supervisor handle this himself?
- b. Does he need help in handling it?
- c. Should he refer this to his supervisor?
- d. Time the action properly.
- e. Do not pass the buck.

4. Check Results

- a. How soon should the supervisor follow up?
- b. How often should he follow up?
- c. Watch for changes in output, attitudes, and relationships.
- d. Did the action result in achievement of the objectives?

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF THE SUPERVISOR

In meeting his responsibilities in the area of understanding and working with employees, the supervisor must keep the following factors in mind.

1. The supervisor must know his people as individuals.
2. Employees must understand what is expected of them.
3. People must have guidance in doing their work.
4. Good work should be recognized.
5. Poor work deserves constructive criticism.
6. People should have opportunities to show they can accept greater responsibility.
7. Work must be done in a safe and healthful environment.
8. People should be encouraged to improve themselves.