

HOW TO BE A BETTER SUPERVISOR



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8 Ideas to Revitalize Your Team's Morale and Productivity

What's at Stake

People or profits? Results or relationships? Safety or Savings? As supervisors we often feel an enormous amount of pressure (spoken or unspoken) to make these types of difficult decisions. We also feel a great deal of conflict as well over the choices we make.

1. Rock Your Role

Your team's morale and performance begin with you. Can they look at you and see the excellence you're asking of them? It's hard to bring your A game 100 percent of the time, but the most effective leaders show up to play every day.

If you want to rock your role, don't keep doing what you've always done. It's about progress, not perfection. Hone your craft. Read what the experts are saying about the future in your field. Find a mentor or two who have skills you admire. Invest in a leadership development program for you

and your team.

2. Mind the M.I.T

In our experience, the number one cause of poor morale, performance problems and subpar results is a lack of clarity. You can boost morale and productivity by communicating clear, shared expectations. This is where your Toastmasters training can pay off.

One way to make sure everyone is on the same page is to "Mind the M.I.T." (Most Important Thing). Be sure to prioritize. What is the most important thing your team can achieve this year? This quarter? This week? What is the most important thing they can do today? Does everyone on the team know what "winning" looks like?

3. Ditch the Diaper Drama

Your team needs direct feedback that will

help them know what to continue and what to change. However, most leaders struggle to give direct feedback. Gallup recently reported that less than one in four employees said their manager provides meaningful feedback. We've observed many leaders who struggle to give direct feedback in a way that helps their employees. Like stinky diapers wrapped with plastic in the modern-day diaper pail, they wrap their feedback in layers of self-protection, so it doesn't offend anyone.

When giving speech evaluations, Toastmasters learn to strike the balance between positive feedback and constructive criticism. They encourage the speaker, but they also point out what needs to be improved. Effective leaders speak the truth. Improve your team's morale and productivity by having the tough conversations using the INSPIRE feedback model (see sidebar) and speak

truth with compassion.

4. Channel Challengers

“No one listens around here, they don’t know what I do, and they don’t care what I think.” These are the signature words of ineffective leaders. In contrast, effective leaders recognize the value every person on their team contributes. They deliberately surround themselves with people who will challenge their thinking.

It’s not enough to have an “open door policy” and passively wait for people to tell you what you need to hear. Instead, seek out feedback. Ask your team, “What is working to help you be productive?” Then ask, “As your leader, what is one thing I could do that would help you be more productive at your work?” Listen, respond and watch your team’s morale and performance soar.

5. Own The Ugly

Many leaders won’t take responsibility for their mistakes. They fear that apologizing makes them look weak or lose credibility. In fact, the opposite is true.

When you make a mistake or hurt someone, it’s not a secret. Your team knows and

they’re watching to see what you do. Can they trust you to own it? Apologize, make it right and move on. Your people will trust you, they’ll more likely take responsibility themselves and morale will improve.

6. Play The Game, Don’t Game The Score

To maximize your team’s morale and productivity, keep them focused on what matters most. Your customer doesn’t care what you get on your “scorecard.” They care about the value you deliver. Isolate the key behaviors that truly drive the value you contribute to your clients, customers and members.

Reinforce these critical actions every day and the score will take care of itself. Above all else, don’t let your team ‘game the score’—that is, don’t waste time trying to artificially adjust measurements.

7. Put People Before Projects

Productive teams enjoy high levels of trust, connection and collaboration. Collaboration is more than simply working together; it’s an attitude that communicates you are in it with your people, not apart from them.

A great employee experience, or a rewarding member experience in Toastmasters, starts as you recognize the unique strengths and perspectives each person brings to the team. Take the time to look at a person’s potential to perform beyond her current role. Build trust with, and between, your people. Listen to what is important to them and encourage their success.

8. Trust The Trenches

In your employees and volunteers, you have a tremendous source of product knowledge, insights into customers and performance improvements. Listen to what they have to say. They may not know how valuable their observations can be. Help them learn how to recognize the opportunities, celebrate their success and give them the credit when their ideas work.

Final Thought

When you consistently practice these eight behaviors, you’ll see your team’s morale improve and their productivity increase. That’s not just winning—that’s winning well.

The Three Key Rules of Running a Safety Meeting

Set the Agenda

It may seem like an obvious requirement, but a lot of meetings start with no clear sense of purpose. The meeting's agenda can be summarized on a handout, written on a whiteboard or discussed explicitly at the outset, but everyone should know why they've gathered and what they're supposed to be accomplishing. The agenda provides a compass for the conversation, so the meeting can get back on track if the discussion wanders off course.

Start On Time. End On Time.

Nothing can drain the energy from a room quite like waiting for the person in charge to show up.

Time is money, of course, and all that sitting around and trying to guess when the boss may arrive is a waste of a precious resource. When establishing the informal rules of an organization,





employees take their cues from the person in the corner office. If that person wants meetings to start on time, meetings will start on time.

Just as important as starting on time is ending on time. A definitive end time will help ensure that you accomplish what's on

your agenda and get people back to their work promptly.

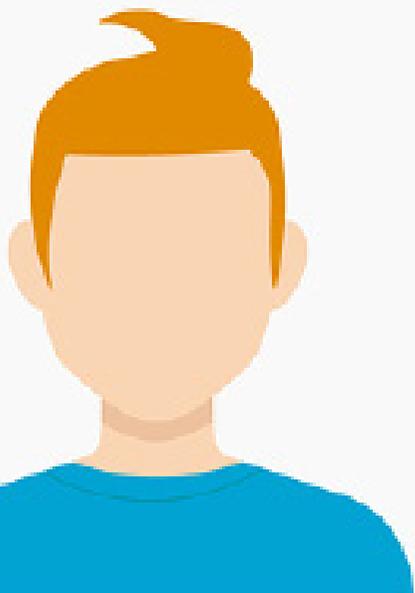
End With an Action Plan

Leave the last few minutes of every meeting to discuss the next steps. This discussion should include deciding who

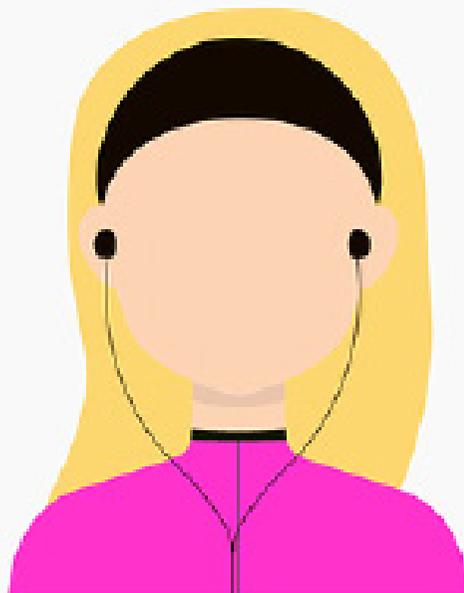
is responsible for what, and what the deadlines are. Otherwise, all the time you spent on the meeting will be for naught.

The Four Types of Meeting Participants

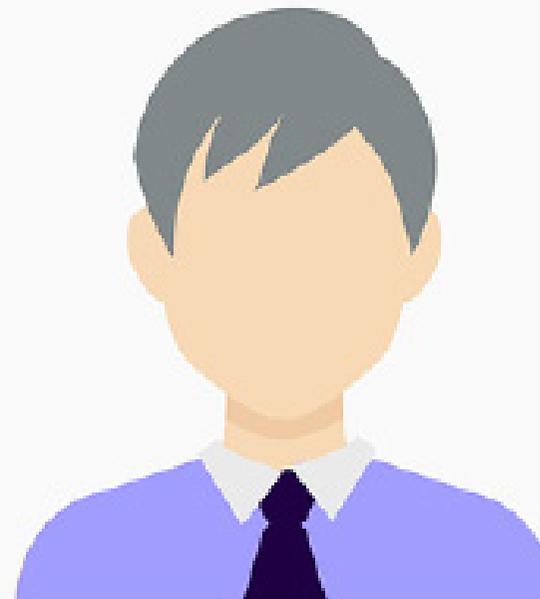
The Hostile Participant



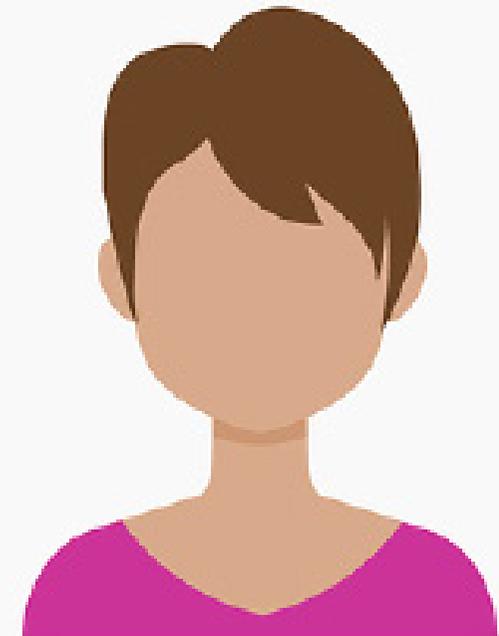
The Critic



The Uniformed Participant



Sympathetic Participant



Be a Better Supervisor: Know Your Meeting Participants

It can be tricky dealing with the various personality types, levels of experience, and differing backgrounds of meeting participants. You can't always predict what their reaction will be, and you may not have advance knowledge of who will be in attendance, but you can still prepare. One way is by understanding the four general types of meeting participants you're likely to encounter and how best to interact with them. You may also encounter entire groups that have these characteristics – the response is the same.

1. The Hostile Participant

Sometimes a meeting participant is just not that into you. They might be openly hostile or downright aggressive. The trick is to deal with their hostility as quickly as possible and get them on your side.

- Establish rules of engagement, keep control of the meeting, and keep it moving along.
- Challenge them if you know they are wrong or have incomplete evidence. Don't humiliate them; illuminate them with the truth or rest of the story.
- Use humor to disarm them, but don't sacrifice or undermine your authority as a speaker.
- Use stories and facts.

2. The Critic

Critical participants consider themselves intelligent – probably more intelligent than you. They will be skeptical of the information and actively look for ways to disprove what you're saying.

Present them with cold hard facts. Which means you'll have to do your research and be prepared.

Don't exaggerate. Use simple and powerful examples to communicate your message.

3. The Uninformed Participant

Get a read on the level of knowledge, experience, and skill your participants have so you can engage participants across the spectrum.

- Question the audience to find out what they know and don't know.
- Offer some basic facts to help fill in gaps – do this at the beginning and throughout the meeting as needed.
- If there is a large gap in knowledge, experience, and skill, for example a meeting with a mix of newly hired and veteran workers, consider breaking the group up into more uniform groups and tailoring information to each group.

4. Sympathetic Participant

Sympathetic participants are your ally against the hostile and critical. They can also help you win over the cynics and provide help to the uninformed.

- Appeal to what you have in common and how you're alike to help create and strengthen your bond.
- But be sincere or you'll lose their sympathy quickly.

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Overcoming Reporting Reluctance

It can be hard to control hazards and prevent injuries if you're not aware of the near misses, "minor" injuries, or unsafe work practices your workers are experiencing or witnessing. One of the main culprits contributing to this lack of insight is often worker reluctance to report these occurrences.

Why does reporting reluctance matter?

When workers are hesitant to report a near miss, what they deem a small or minor injury, or an unsafe work practice or condition, what might have been an easy fix or only required first aid, can turn into a costly injury or a serious incident.

It also highlights deeper management and cultural issues. There's likely a reason, or two, why workers aren't reporting. Understanding what these reasons might be can help you combat them, strengthen your workplace safety culture, keep your employees safe, and save your organization some cash.

Why are employees reluctant to report?

There have been several studies done on the reasons employees don't report safety-related

issues. Here are some of the more interesting highlights.

In a Canadian study examining young workers' responses to unsafe work practices, the researchers found that most of the young workers in the study took a "wait-and-see" approach to safety concerns. Their reluctance was related to fear of being fired, being new and inexperienced, supervisor indifference (real or perceived), and overall feelings of powerlessness.

The young workers surveyed didn't feel as though their opinions and concerns would be taken seriously given their age and lack of experience. So, they often opted to wait and see if anyone else noticed the hazard or if the hazard simply went away on its own. They would also talk to other workers and if others agreed about the hazard, they would then approach the supervisor as a group.

In a study done by the Center for Construction Research and Training, 135 construction workers were asked if they ever failed to report an injury and if yes, why. Twenty-seven percent said they had. Workers who explained

their failure to report a work-related injury were most likely to say that “my injury was small” and “pain is a natural part of my job.”

Other common reasons for not reporting include:

- Embarrassment or peer pressure.
- Most workers don’t want to be called a tattletail, brownnoser, or any other school-yard nickname of a similar nature, if they report a co-worker doing something unsafe, or refuse to work in an unsafe condition. In some fields of work reporting a “minor” injury is likely to get you labeled as “weak” or “soft” by your peers and in some cases even your manager. And if injury rates or days without an injury are tied to incentive programs or bonuses, it is even more unlikely a worker will report an injury. So, it’s not surprising that many incidents go unreported.

Reporting process is difficult.

If an organization makes reporting near misses, injuries, or hazardous conditions difficult, employees are going to respond by not reporting. And can you blame them? Filling out reports, forms, and paperwork is a drag – and not something many of us like to do. Not to mention a tedious reporting process cuts into production

time. Don’t forget the managers and front-line supervisors who have to access and read these reports. If it’s difficult for them, they are likely to do one of two things:

- Ignore it.
- Discourage their workers from using it.
- Lack of interest from the organization/management.

Your employees are smart and perceptive. They will pick up on obvious and not-so-obvious clues that the organization or their managers don’t support a reporting program. Whether it’s not following up and fixing hazards; failing to correct near-miss causes promptly; or holding managers accountable for reporting metrics, your employees will get the message loud and clear.

Lack of understanding on what to report.

Employees may not know they should report near misses or minor injuries because of lack of communication or training. And, even if they’ve been told to report near misses, injuries, and other safety concerns, they may not have a clear understanding of what the organization’s definition of a near miss or minor injury is.

Be a Better Supervisor

As a supervisor, you can have a direct and positive impact on helping employees overcome reporting reluctance. Here are some ways to do it.

Make reporting easy. Whether it’s online or a paper form, the reporting system should be easy to access and easy to use.

Follow up and take action on all reports. Action could mean correcting a hazard or explaining to the person who made the report why a fix isn’t necessary. It could mean addressing and discussing a safety concern in your next weekly safety meeting – without embarrassing or singling out the employee who filed the concern of course.

Explain it. Take the time to define and explain what should be reported, when it should be reported, how to report, and who to report it to. i.e. what criteria determine if an event is a near miss and worth reporting.

Teamwork and Culture Is Imparative

WHAT'S AT STAKE

Nearly everyone has heard sayings such as ‘Many hands make light work’ or ‘None of us is as smart as all of us.’ These sayings refer to teamwork. Many people associate teamwork with sales teams or sports teams, but teamwork is also a vital element in keeping you and your co-workers safe and healthy on the job.

WHAT'S THE DANGER

Have you met a ‘lone wolf’ in the workplace? This type of person sticks to himself, shuns contact with others and isn’t out to be friendly or popular with co-workers. The lone wolf doesn’t need or want anyone’s help. But from a safety standpoint, the lone wolf isn’t helping anyone, least of all himself.

EXAMPLE

A worker at a care home is washing and dressing an 80-year-old quadriplegic resident alone, in spite of written procedures stating that a second worker needs to be present for this task. The resident falls from the bed and dies and the care

home is fined by a government workplace safety and health agency.

In this case the lone worker wasn’t hurt, but someone in his or her care died. However, lone workers are injured and killed on the job all the time and frequently, no one witnesses their deaths.

Certain jobs are designed to be performed by single workers, with little or no supervision. But if you ‘work alone’ among a group of workers, you may be putting your own safety and the safety of your co-workers at risk.

HOW TO PROTECT YOURSELF

When teamwork is a requirement in the workplace, there are several benefits, including these:

A worker picks up a heavy object to see if he can handle its weight and quickly realizes it’s too heavy to carry safely alone. Another worker spots him struggling and says, ‘Let me help you with that.’



A supervisor holds a safety meeting to discuss a number of recent repetitive strain injuries in one area of the plant. He breaks the crew into two groups and asks them to brainstorm solutions to the problem. Ten minutes later, the teams offer up several solid ideas for tackling the issue.

- All new hires are teamed up with experienced ‘safety mentors’ to watch out for them to ensure they are not working unsafely. The old hands enjoy their teaching moments and the new employees are relieved to be able to ask questions when they are unsure about procedures.
- A huge order comes in and the deadline seems impossibly short. But workers are split into teams to handle specific tasks and amazing progress is made within two days.
- People working within a team may discover talents, such as great leadership ability, that they didn’t know they had.
- Teamwork is an essential part of morale and safety culture in a workplace. If people feel that others are looking out for their safety and wellbeing, the workplace will be far more harmonious.

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Helping Employees Conquer Workplace Stress

Workplace stress is normal – but when the stress is excessive it can wreak havoc on the productivity, performance, and physical and emotional health of your employees.

Workplace stress is normal – but when the stress is excessive it can wreak havoc on the productivity, performance, and physical and emotional health of your employees. It can also interfere with job safety...

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Lowering Materials Handling Costs

A vital component of your role as a supervisor is to help your organization control costs. Of course, having a safe work environment and providing training, tools, and other resources to keep managers and employees safe goes a long way in controlling costs. Another way you can make a big impact on costs is by reducing waste related to materials handling.

The following eight ways to lower materials handling costs, is adapted from the Logistics and Materials Handling Blog by Adapt a Lift Group. While these strategies are focused on warehouses, they can be adapted for other locations and activities.

Be a Better Supervisor

1. Error Reduction

Implement a focus on reducing error in areas where materials are handled. By collecting data on error rates and setting specific targets to reduce these rates, improvements in the overall quality of operations can be achieved. A reduction in error rates improves efficiencies and more importantly reduces unnecessary

expenses.

2. Maintain Storage Conditions

Ensuring storage conditions are appropriate such as temperature and humidity can guarantee any goods stored within the warehouse will be maintained to a superior standard. As uncovered areas of storage can subject goods to weather damage it is important to ensure the coverage and secure storage of goods to avoid unnecessary costs especially during peak periods when the movement of goods will increase drastically.

3. Reduce Touch Labor

Reducing the number of times employees are required to handle material contributes to an increase in productivity and profit. Production creates value and every minute spent moving, sorting, preparing or storing material equates to lost productivity. Implementing a productive touch labor management plan can save your business time and money.

4. Save Energy





Timers and sensors which ensure lights turn off when no one is around an area is energy efficient and will save money on electricity bills. Alternatively, replace existing light bulbs with energy-efficient bulbs. A long-term strategy to reduce energy consumption is painting walls white and installing windows to introduce more natural light.

5. Optimize Space

Land is one of the largest contributors to overhead costs in warehousing. Cost per pallet stored should be constantly reviewed to ensure space is always optimized. The type of racking within your warehouse should utilize the height of your warehouse. Aisle space is also a consumer of space and having the right equipment to optimize this

space can contribute to cost savings in the long run. Reviewing space is an important factor in the contribution to long-term strategy and profits.

6. Assess New Technology

Investigate new lower-energy systems for your warehouse which can contribute to cost savings. Replacing older equipment at the optimal time is one way to significantly improve productivity and maximize profit within the warehouse.

7. Employee Suggestions

Employee suggestions can play a key role in reducing costs and improving productivity within the warehouse. Employees have hands-on experience regarding daily operations and

can come up with easy-to-implement cost saving ideas. This also ensures employee commitment to implement these cost saving strategies is greater because they feel more engaged in the initiative.

8. Continuous Improvement Program

Reducing wasted motion, wasted time and wasted inventory can be controlled through the implementation of a continuous improvement program. The program should include visual communication of information, process mapping, process control, and identification and elimination of defects. By implementing such a program within the warehouse, efficiencies can be improved, and costs can be minimized.