

Bright Ideas



Supporting Organizational
Excellence & Innovation

Management is neither leadership nor supervision

Last year I was asked to develop online training with separate units on supervision, management and leadership skills. My first thought was, "There's tons already out there." As I checked out the available training, I discovered that most either combined supervision with management, or management with leadership. But they're not the same, even though the same person may carry out all three roles.

People can be good leaders but lack good management skills, or vice versa. People can also be good managers but lousy supervisors, or vice versa. Fortunately, weak skill sets (or even good skill sets) can be improved with knowledge and practise...if you know your weaknesses and where to get the knowledge you need. Becoming a great supervisor, manager or leader instead of just a good one is a matter of filling those skill gaps.

What makes a great supervisor

Being a supervisor is fundamentally about using people skills. A good supervisor is fair, flexible, sensible, organized and cares what happens. The core of the work is

supervising people from hiring to retiring. Supervisors hire and train their staff. But more than that, they are responsible for developing their staff by coaching and mentoring them. They need to understand what motivates each individual

While good supervisors manage by wandering around, good managers manage by objectives.

and be flexible to ensure that rewards are truly rewarding. Fair evaluation and sensible disciplinary actions should correct problems rather than de-motivate.

People skills are also involved in team building, another key supervisor task. This requires an understanding of group dynamics, diversity and conflict resolution. Supervisors are typically involved in different types of teams—of reportees, peers, projects or committees—and may play different roles in each type.

Finally, supervisors must manage processes that affect and are affected by people. They lead group meetings, administer team budgets, manage work flow and write reports for management and others. Although managing work flow sounds like just a matter of good organization, it involves assigning tasks to the right person or

persons, providing the right type and amount of support, and ensuring that follow-up happens when needed to meet priorities. Assigning the right person does not always mean the one who knows the task best. It can also mean assigning a task to a new person who wishes to learn the role or who is seen as having the potential to excel at the task. In this instance, the supervisor will also consider whether hands-on supervision should be carried out by him or herself or by the person who would normally be assigned the task and what support that individual needs to excel at supervision.

The final support process is ensuring that staff have all the resources they need to carry out their work efficiently and effectively. Resources

Bright Ideas

Editor: Kathleen Biersdorff, Ph.D.
K. K. Biersdorff Consulting
23 Harvest Oak Green NE
Calgary, AB T3K 3Y2
Phone: (403) 226-0585
Fax: (403) 920-0586
kkbiersdorff@shaw.ca
www.kkbiersdorff.ca

Bright Ideas is published quarterly by K. K. Biersdorff Consulting and provided free as a value-added service to clients.

include technology, space, time and access to the right people.

What makes a great manager

A good manager is analytical, well-informed and trustworthy. Because managers typically also supervise others, they need to have good people skills; however, the manager role is focused more on systems and planning.

Management supports the work of staff by ensuring that the structure and rules provide the right resources and directions. While they may or may not be involved in visioning, they are certainly tasked with turning the vision into reality by setting priorities, and developing and monitoring business and strategic plans. Good managers also engage in succession planning and crisis management.

Of course, the best way to manage a crisis is to prevent it, if at all possible. Good managers set up the organizational structure and control systems through the development of effective policies and procedures, performance management systems and processes. Policies and procedures must be clearly articulated and communicated to be effective. While good supervisors may rely on Tom Peters' *management by wandering around*, good managers are more likely to trust Peter Drucker's *management by objectives*.

While supervisors may administer budgets and certainly provide managers with input regarding what their teams need to be effective, managers set and monitor budgets and are responsible for contracting processes and, in the case of non-profits, fundraising. This means that managers must build and maintain good public relations with stakeholders. Otherwise they find themselves constantly putting out metaphorical fires with staff, clients, funders or regulators.

What makes a great leader

Leadership can be situational or a permanent part of one's organizational management role. A good leader is forward-looking, inspiring, prepared and justly confident. A leader does not have to be charismatic, but it certainly doesn't hurt. In order to build credibility, however, a leader *must* have integrity.

While a great leader is often described as a visionary, the vision is not achieved by navel gazing. Rather, the vision is often achieved through listening to others inside and outside the organization, analyzing and reflecting on what is learned. A leader is as likely to get behind someone else's great idea as an "early adopter" as to come up with the great idea personally.

Unless a leader can inspire others, the "big picture" vision may just as well be a hallucination.

The leader's vision must become a *shared* vision throughout the organization. Communication in the language—or languages—of stakeholders creates that vision. This involves engaging others through the sharing of stories that resonate with them and inspire them to action. Today, social media may be an important part of that process, at least for larger and more complex organizations, because it can overcome distance and leadership time constraints. It also sets the stage for the leader's community to engage in a conversation that builds commitment. Social media lets people raise concerns and get answers from the top that are not distorted as the message moves down through the layers of management and supervision. However, social media cannot build credibility for a leader who isn't trustworthy; it just becomes another case of flavour-of-the-month management.

Leadership is fundamentally about managing change. It is about innovation, taking risks and learning from mistakes. With participatory leadership models, supporting and managing change involves collaboration and recognizing others in the celebration of successes. Yet, despite the sharing of power in a participatory approach to leadership, the role of the leader remains fundamentally the same as always.

From Where I Sit



Save yourself

Jacob Marley pleaded with Scrooge to "save yourself" in the classic *A Christmas Carol*. Although Marley was referring to the dangers of greed and lack of caring for others to Scrooge's immortal soul, the message still has meaning today for

other reasons. The demands on our time have skyrocketed with instant communication and, therefore, the requirement to do more and do it faster. Yet, our brains have not developed the capacity to think things through faster.

Stop. Breathe. Consider. Set your priorities based on their likely impact. God bless us, everyone.



K. K. Biersdorff Consulting supports organizational excellence and innovation through an array of planning, research, communication and training services that take projects seamlessly from start to finish.