



7 Things You Need to Know as a First-Time Supervisor

Your new role as a supervisor will be necessarily different than your previous role, and how you perform as a supervisor will be the biggest determining factor in your professional success and satisfaction going forward. With all there is to learn and all that is riding on this, it can be overwhelming. Knowing what you need to know will help.

1. KNOW YOUR MOTIVATION

Ask yourself, early and often, **do you want to be a supervisor?** If the answer is no, it is time to make a change. If the answer is yes, think about your reasons. If you want to be a supervisor in order to have control and get your way, you are in for an unpleasant surprise about what makes supervisors successful. If you find you do not have the interest nor the energy to invest in doing it well, for your sake and for those you lead, make sure you find a path that better matches your interests.

2. KNOW YOUR VISION

Being an effective team leader requires that you have a clear vision for your team, that you are able to articulate that vision to your team, and that you are able to get your team on board with that vision. **So, what is your vision for your team?** What are you trying to accomplish? What kind of culture are you trying to create? What are the expectations, both explicit and unspoken? What are your goals and what is your plan to get there? The answers to these questions must be clear to you, and they must be clear to your team.

3. KNOW YOUR PEOPLE

One of the biggest adjustments for many first-time supervisors is how much collaboration is required. To do this, you must invest great time and effort into building relationships with your team and knowing them, both in terms of who they are as staff and who they are as human beings. What are their goals? What is their communication style? How do they approach conflict? What are their strengths? How do they like to be recognized? What do they need from you?

At the core of management is relationships with those you manage. This will take time with each member of your team and will take longer for some than others. You must be patient and you must be persistent. It is the basis not only of how you manage but in managing itself.



4. KNOW YOUR STRENGTHS

To achieve your goals and support your team in achieving theirs, you need to know everybody's strengths including your own. Your job as supervisor is to figure out what everybody does best and provide the opportunity for them to do that every day. So when you think of each member of your team can you quickly name what they do best? Are they doing it every day? What about you?

5. KNOW YOUR LIMITS

Knowing your limits includes limits around your energy, patience, expectations, boundaries, workload, and growth. When do you need support? When do you need some time off? When do you need to establish or enforce a boundary? When do you need to let someone go? Where do you need to say no? These questions will arise throughout your time as a supervisor and most of them will not have easy answers. Self-reflection will be important as will seeking outside sources of support to help you work through it. Establishing clear, healthy boundaries will be necessary to set yourself and your team up for success.

6. KNOW WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW

Much of what made you successful as a frontline worker will make you successful as a supervisor- strong communication, prioritization, reliability. There will also be new skills you need to develop such as planning and facilitating meetings, giving feedback, and hiring. As you take on your new role it is important to identify what you need to learn and get the training and support you need to learn it. As you start using each of these skills for the first time, it is important to continue receiving feedback and support so you can grow those skills to where they need to be.

7. KNOW YOUR SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Being an effective supervisor will require an investment for as long as you continue to be a supervisor. To continue growing, it will be important for you to know what sources of support you have- coaching, mentoring, training, trusted colleagues, and supervisors. You must invest in yourself as you invest in your staff. Advocate for and seek out support for yourself throughout your time as a supervisor and be willing to try new things as your goals and skills change over time. What are your current sources of support? How are you utilizing them? Where might you need additional support? Who do you need to ask?

There is a lot to learn and adjust to as a new supervisor. Knowing where to begin can be overwhelming. Understanding what to expect and securing the support you need will set you up for success. It is never too early to start and there will never be a time when you have it all figured out. It is a journey filled with great challenge and opportunity. I wish you great joy and great success along the way!