

TRAINING WITHIN INDUSTRY BULLETIN

War Manpower Commission
Bureau of Training

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HOW TO IMPROVE JOB RELATIONS

In these times, for maximum production, machines and materials are not enough. We need the individual skills and the maximum cooperation of every man and woman who is at work turning out what our armed forces and civilian workers have to have.

You know how important it is not to have any lost production because of misunderstandings on the job, or because people do not realize the vital part they have in the war effort, or because someone is slowed down on his job by things that happened off the job.

Experienced supervisors who have demonstrated their ability to “work well with people” have developed a special skill. You can acquire this skill. By making use of it, you can be sure of meeting your production requirements.

This is the time; and the place is right where you are!

C. R. Dooley, Director
Training Within Industry Service

EVERYDAY PROBLEMS

Does anyone in your department ever refuse to do some particular job? Or, maybe, even quit his job? Do you have any people who are discouraged or who make other people dissatisfied?

Are there any changes being made in your plant—in how you work, what you do—in the people you work with?

Does everyone come to work regularly, or are you ever held up by absenteeism? And do you ever find you are bypassed by people who go over your head to your own boss?

All job relations problems don't come up at once, but they do occur, and management does hold supervisors responsible for handling such problems.

The supervisor today needs a high degree of skill to handle his own problems. But, as part of the skill, first of all, he needs a strong foundation for good relationships with other people whose work he directs.

THE FOUNDATION OF GOOD RELATIONS

You do not produce a ton of steel, build a single jeep—it is the people you supervise who turn out production. The supervisor needs to remember constantly that results come through people.

There are certain basic principles which are foundations in establishing and maintaining good relations between you and those whose work you direct. Always remember to:

Let each worker know how he is getting along.
 Give credit when due.
 Tell people in advance about changes that will affect them.
 Make best use of each person's ability.

These principles apply to all workers, and they do not represent actions which are to be taken only once or at rare intervals. Constantly following these in day-to-day operations will pay dividends.

Let each worker know how he is getting along.

It is important to keep people posted on how they are measuring up and what is expected of them. The "everything is all right unless I tell you so" philosophy does not fit into modern supervision. The man who is doing all right should be told so. And it is often more important to check the person who is just beginning to skid. If you have to say "you've been slipping for quite a while," you know what the worker will feel—"why didn't you tell me sooner?"

Give credit when due.

The worker and the department deserve to know when their efforts have contributed to an accomplishment. Recognition of good work or faithful performance makes it easier to get extra effort again. You like to get proper credit yourself.

Tell people in advance about changes that will affect them.

It is not always possible for you to let a worker "in" on all decisions which affect him, but he can and should always be given the chance to "have his say." If you give the reasons for changes before they are made, you will avoid many misunderstandings.

Make best use of each person's ability.

Everyone likes to feel, particularly in wartime, that he is working at his highest level of skill and ability. Take advantage of special interest kinds of work, and give each person as much responsibility and work as he can handle.

TREATING PEOPLE AS INDIVIDUALS

While these foundations apply to all people, you cannot let it go at "treating them all alike." No one wants to be known simply as a time-card number or as "the new man," neither you nor those you supervise. We are all different. What happens to one operator off the job makes him different from his partner on the same job. Each of us wants to be known for his own personal characteristics. There are things that you feel are important to you as an individual. You must remember other individuals feel the same way about themselves.

THE SKILL OF UNDERSTANDING PEOPLE

Applying these foundations of good worker–supervisor relations will not guarantee smooth operations for you, but will prevent many misunderstandings.

However, there are other things which you must consider. You need to know each individual employee and what is important to him. You need to know your people for everyday operation of your department, and you particularly need this information when you have a difficult situation to handle as a job relations problem.

HOW TO HANDLE A PROBLEM

Because changes do occur, and problems do arise, you need to have skill in handling the situations which are within your responsibility. Often you are on the spot and you feel you must do something immediately. Hasty action may mean that you have a more difficult situation to handle later. You always must stop to consider just what you are trying to accomplish. These steps should then be considered as the outline for action.

1. Get the facts—be sure you have the whole story.
2. Weigh and decide—don't jump to conclusions.
3. Take action—don't pass the buck.
4. Check results—did your action help production?

1. Get the facts.

Problems may come up because of something that happens at the moment, but you need to get the whole background. Some of it will be made up of facts about the employee—his age, length of service, and experience on this job.

You will need, of course, to take into consideration both the plant rules and just “the way things are done here.”

Remember in getting the facts you may think you know the person quite well, but if you classify him as a “good fellow” or a “chronic kicker,” you are not really looking at an individual person. You must regard him as a person who is different from his work partner and from every other person in the department, in every single aspect whether by a very slight or a very great degree.

As supervisor, you must know what that man thinks and feels about himself and the people around him. Find out what the man wants—is he able or willing to express it—and what does he think should be done? And why? The experienced supervisor knows that he must also consider such other factors as health and working conditions which may be affecting the man.

If more than one person is involved, you must go through the same fact-finding steps for each person. Before you can plan what to do, you must be sure you really have the whole story.

2. Weigh and decide.

All these facts must be assembled and considered together. They will suggest various “possible actions” which you must check against your objective and the effect on the individual, the group, and production. When all the factors are brought together, fitted in, and considered in the light of their relations to each other, many times the right answer almost “jumps out.” The wise thing to do becomes clearer.

Certainly you, the man on the spot, are in the best place to know the right thing to do, for you have the most complete picture of the assembled facts. If you jump to conclusions, you make poor use of your strategic position. When you act, without evaluating the whole situation you are likely to have more difficult problems to handle later.

3. Take action.

While jumping to conclusions is a poor way to handle supervisory problems, putting off action may be equally unfortunate. A supervisor cannot “pass the buck” or he, himself, will be bypassed.

However, it is not “passing the buck” to recognize after full consideration of the problem that there are some situations which you cannot handle yourself. You also make a decision and take action when you size up a situation as one on which you need help, or recognize one which is not within your own job to handle and see that it is passed on to the person who does have the responsibility and authority.

In any action, timing must be considered—the wrong “time” can make it the wrong thing to do.

4. Check results.

You must determine whether your action worked. If it did not, you must re-examine the whole situation and attempt to find what of importance you overlooked. Checking the results of action is necessary in every situation because conditions change, and what worked with one individual will not necessarily work with another.

“GOOD” SUPERVISION

One of the hardest parts of your job will be that of giving consideration to the importance of people in a problem situation and knowing what is important to each individual person. This is not simply a matter of determining what is right or wrong, or deciding what is just or unjust, but it is a practical approach to effective supervision. It may be thought to take too much time but day-by-day use of this skill in dealing with people will save you time in the long run.

If you know your people well enough to build them into a smooth operating group you will be playing an important part in war production.

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