

## TRAINING WITHIN INDUSTRY BULLETIN SERIES

Bureau of Training  
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### HOW TO SELECT SUPERVISORS—A 6-STEP PROGRAM

Every plant is always on the lookout for more supervisors. And, in rapidly expanding plants, the need for supervisors constantly becomes more acute. Good supervisors are hard to find. YOU HAVE TO TRAIN THEM.

Management is dependent on supervisors in order to reach the big group of workers in the plant, but not every worker wants to be a supervisor. Some actually refuse to take responsibility. They do not want to give orders to their friends. Many are incapable of becoming good supervisors even though they would jump at the chance. They cannot plan, or follow through, or adjust their thinking to supervisory problems. Some people just can't quit "doing" and begin to direct others "to do." Poor judgment, slowness, indecisiveness, inflexibility, or annoying mannerisms prevents them from ever becoming effective supervisors.

Where, then, do we find men and women to train as supervisors? They must be discovered among the ambitious workers who are willing to pay the price of leadership, and who can work well with their associates. You spot them in the rank-and-file of your own plant.

Many plants give careful attention to the selection of top supervisors, but "just appoint" quite casually the first-line supervisors, the ones who really are in closest touch with the workers who get out production. First-line supervisors are particularly important because they make up the group from which higher supervisors are most often selected. The greater a supervisor's responsibility, the more costly are the mistakes if the man is not really fit for supervisory work.

Management delegates much of its responsibility to supervisors; hence, initial selection is of prime importance. Selection of men and women for supervisory positions is a definite responsibility of management, but assistance can be gained and the selection procedure improved if the recommendations of present supervisors and, sometimes, of both union and individual workers are enlisted.

To find one leader you must get the facts about a number of possible candidates. You must choose carefully, because a mistake is costly. Personal prejudice and favoritism must be avoided. You must find a potential supervisor and train him. And don't fail to give him a feeling of PERSONAL SATISFACTION in his new job.

C. R. Dooley, Director  
Training Within Industry

### PICKING THE WORKER TO BE TRAINED AS A SUPERVISOR

In slow moving times, supervisors often were created overnight by someone who said, "Tomorrow you take over the department. Now you are a foreman." Many of them turned out to be excellent. In easy-going times, the boss does know his men. But when five, twenty, or a hundred new supervisors are needed over a relatively short period in a rapidly expanding organization, there is little time to get well enough acquainted with workers to pass judgment on their qualifications for supervisory jobs. Under present conditions, superintendents, and other company executives, don't know individual workmen well enough to take such "shots in the dark."

A more systematic method is needed. Selection is improved when the method includes participation by the present supervisors in the nomination of candidates; use of a uniform, objective measure of ability; and group judgment of candidates.

The selection program described in this bulletin has been outlined from industrial experience. It will help to spot the men and women who will be likely candidates for supervisory responsibility. The procedure is simple. And, it works.

### EXPLAINING THE SELECTION PROGRAM TO MANAGEMENT

This selection program must be completely understood by top management and it must have management approval. Management must see that the approach is outlined to the operating heads. Responsibility for this selection program must be assigned to one operating or personnel man who will see that it is carried through all stages of operation.

Basically, there are six steps.

1. Present supervisors are asked to nominate candidates for additional supervisory jobs. It may also be feasible to ask for nominations from the workers and from union representatives.
2. Each supervisor's nominations are discussed with him.
3. A committee made up of an operating man, a personnel man, and another representative designated by management considers the records in order to prepare a list of candidates. Each candidate on this list is interviewed if he is not known to the members of the committee.
4. A standard objective measure, such as a test, is used to get information about the ability of each candidate.
5. The selection committee reviews all the qualifications of the candidates.
6. Those judged to be qualified for supervisory training are selected. This will provide, in addition to immediate needs, a reserve to meet future demands.

At the time that management decides to undertake this selection program and assigns the responsibility for operating it, a follow-up procedure to make sure it is carried out must be agreed upon. Follow-up responsibility must be assigned to a specific person.

### 1. STARTING THE SELECTION PROGRAM

The need must be explained to the present supervisors. They must be assured that their own jobs will not be unfavorably affected, and their cooperation must be won. To accomplish this it is necessary that an operating official who carries weight with the men call the supervisors together and inform them about the new method. He will need to:

- a. Explain the need of having new supervisors coming along.
- b. Raise questions, such as, "Do we have any workmen in the ranks who might become good supervisors, if properly trained?"
- c. Emphasize that there is no thought of displacing present supervisors. It is part of their jobs to be on the lookout for new talent. We can't afford to overlook good

material. "All of us need understudies. You cannot move up until there is someone to take your place."

- d. Make assignment: "Consider all the men in your departments. Don't talk to them about this topic, but think about them. Jot down names of all the men who you feel might have supervisory abilities. Do not suggest men from other departments—we want information about the men you really know something about from intimate working relationships. You know which men take the lead, and whether the others in the group accept this or resent it. You know, too, which ones learn new jobs most quickly."
- e. Discuss personal qualities which are required of supervisors. Think in terms of the whole plant and what is expected of a supervisor.
- f. Remind them that, while this supervisor has to know the work, the best operator is not necessarily the best supervisor, but he must have enough operating ability to merit respect from the workers he supervises.
- g. Set a specific time to have a list of names handed in.

Sometimes supervisors consciously or unconsciously stand in a man's way—if he is a good operator the supervisor does not want to lose him. Requiring each supervisor to name "two or three" will shake good men loose.

If management wishes to get nominations from the union and from individual workmen, the same steps of explanation should be followed.

## 2. GETTING INFORMATION ABOUT SUPERVISORY CANDIDATES

Not all the men and women who are suggested will be good possibilities. It is necessary to get more facts about those nominated. The supervisors who suggest names will be able to furnish much unrecorded detail.

The person assigned to head the selection committee will need to discuss with each supervisor the persons whose names he has suggested. Ask him to tell you why he nominated the person, but don't put him on the spot. This is a confidential fact-finding process, not a debate. Consider the following:

- a. What is the man's work record, including accident record and absenteeism as well as quality and quantity of production turned out? Does he know the work?
- b. How does he get along with other workmen on the job?
- c. Has he demonstrated such supervisory traits as ability to break in new men or to get men to cooperate with him on jobs? Do men go to him for help?
- d. How does he conduct himself on the job?
- e. Does he take the lead outside the plant—does he organize community events or sports?
- f. Does he have ideas? Make constructive suggestions for improvements?
- g. Has he been included in any training programs? How did he get along?

Some names maybe withdrawn by the supervisors at this stage, and these persons need not know that they have been considered and judged unsuitable.

### 3. ROUGH SCREENING

Get personnel records (including health and safety records) for all men still on the list, in order to have them considered by the selection committee. This committee should be made up of an operating executive, a personnel man, and another representative designated by management. One of these will be the man responsible for running the selection program. (This selection committee will be most effective if it has occasional “new blood.”)

- a. Search the records. Look for controlling factors, but do not give weight to “stale boners” that should have been forgotten long ago.
- b. Retain the names of all those who look promising.
- c. Consider the supervisor who made the nomination—can you go along with his opinion?

When these records are scrutinized, some additional workers will be considered unsuitable for supervisory development. These need not know that they have been rejected unless such information is considered advisable for personal development.

The surviving candidates who are not known to the members of the selection committee will be interviewed briefly to find out, if possible, about recent instances in which they have taken the lead.

### 4. GETTING INFORMATION FROM SUPERVISORY CANDIDATES

Judgment so far has been largely based on opinion, and there may be little uniformity in the records that are available for consideration. Selection is improved if the method includes the use of a standard, objective measure such as a test.

Some plants will already have records resulting from a recent test which has been used for all employees. In other plants, production reports by workers may give a measure of ability to handle figures and follow written instructions. In others, it may be suitable to call the selected group of candidates together and give them a simple test in order to have a standard measure for all. There are many simple tests available commercially. Some companies prefer to draw up their own tests, using real problems from the plant. Twenty questions of the following type will make up a useful test:

If a rigger’s hourly rate is 90 cents, what will it be if it is increased 10 percent?

What is the cost of a square foot of copper if a piece 1-1/2 feet by 1-1/2 feet costs 45 cents?

A bin holds 200 cubic feet of lime. If the bin is 10 feet long and 5 feet wide, how deep is it?

Divide 144 hours equally among three shifts.

If time and a half is paid for all time over 8 hours, how much will a man get for working 11 hours if the hourly rate is 60 cents?

A warehouse is four stories high, and the interior measurements are 50 by 200 feet for each floor. How many feet of floor space are there in total for all four stories?

How much more interest do you get in a year on \$200 at 4% than on \$200 at 3-1/2%?

Divide:  $921.402 \div 45.3$

If a wire 20 inches long is to be cut so that one piece is  $\frac{2}{3}$  as long as the other piece, how many inches long will the shorter piece be?

How much cheaper per pound is sugar at 12 pounds for a dollar than at 9 cents a pound?

When a plant draws up its own test forms, it usually is desirable to change the figures in the test with successive groups of candidates. Most commercial tests have alternate forms for repeated use.

Whatever test form is used, it is important to remember that the score is only one of the pieces of recorded information on which a decision is based.

Do not set a minimum or "passing" score. Tests are used only to indicate those in the group who have the most ability to do simple figuring and to understand written directions. No time limit should be set. Each person should be allowed to complete the form.

All candidates who are to be tested should be called together to hear about the selection program direct from management, rather than through rumor.

An operating executive, who has prestige with workers, explains the purpose:

- a. The Company is looking to the future.
- b. More supervisors are needed.
- c. Somebody has thought that each man in the room might make a good supervisor.
- d. Supervisors have "headaches" but there are also rewards.
- e. Not every man in the room will be a supervisor.
- f. We need more facts. A practical test will be used to supplement the other records. It will help to indicate those who may become supervisors, but it is not going to be the only point on which the decision is made.
- g. Even if you aren't selected, this isn't going to hurt you. Every man doesn't win every race he enters.

There may be some who will indicate at this time that they are not interested in being considered for supervisory positions. If they wish, they should be allowed to leave before the test is given.

After the tests are scored they should be added to the records concerning the persons. Tests should not be returned. A score may be given to an individual if requested, but not until after the decision as to supervisory appointment has been made.

## 5. REVIEW OF ALL CANDIDATES' QUALIFICATIONS

The selection committee will now review each man's record separately:

- a. personal history data
- b. test record or other uniform measure
- c. other records that indicate the caliber of the man

When the committee considers this final assembly of records, it will be important to consider particularly the man's work history. Has the man had the kind of experience needed on the new assignment, or can he get it quickly? Remember that a man may make a good supervisor on one kind of work but not on another. Consider present and prospective supervisory openings.

The selection committee should look for these qualities and abilities and the knowledge considered essential in your organization. In general, the best prospects are the men who:

- a. Have appropriate experience
- b. Are level-headed, intelligent, trainable, and willing to learn
- c. Have the personal characteristics you want of supervisors in your plant
- d. Have demonstrated their ability to inspire teamwork
- e. Are acceptable to their associates and present supervisors
- f. Are willing to take the responsibility of supervising
- g. Handle their personal affairs intelligently
- h. Can adapt themselves to change

Men who fail in one or more of these qualifications are doubtful prospects.

## 6. SELECTING THE PEOPLE FOR TRAINING

The selection committee now has the facts on which to base its decisions.

- a. Accept or reject each man on the list as a prospect for supervisory training. Decisions should, if possible, be unanimous.
- b. If a sufficient number of likely prospects are "voted in" at this stage, the doubtful cases can be held for future consideration.
- c. If there is disagreement, so that no one gets unanimous endorsement, then further consideration should be given to nominees where there is majority approval of their qualifications.
- d. If possible, observe the man breaking-in a new worker on the job, before final choices.
- e. Let each candidate know where he stands.

This method of picking men indicates who will profit most from sound supervisory training. The next steps are to place him properly and see that he gets good training. Don't just allow him to pick up information as to the supervisor's job in a haphazard manner. Remember that you do not have a ready-made supervisor.

Some of the men may be appointed supervisors at once and get their training on the job. Others may be put in pre-supervisory training courses. Still others will be held as a reserve or pool. And there will be some who you know never will be appointed at all. All these candidates must be told just where they stand.

The "supervisory pool" must not be built up beyond the number needed within a reasonable time, such as three to six months. If there is not any turnover in the pool, the whole selection plan may be unpopular.

In order to follow the supervisory pool principle, it is necessary that:

- a. Management must have some idea or estimate of the number of supervisors needed over some such period as three months.
- b. All promotions to supervisory positions come from the pool.

#### WILL THIS WORK IN YOUR PLANT?

If your plant has an extensive employment procedure, you may already have recent test records that give you an objective, uniform measure—you may already have the information needed for Step 4.

If you do not have many supervisory positions to fill, it probably will be best not to set up a "pool," for if there are no appointments made from it in a reasonable length of time, the men will be more dissatisfied than if they had been told that someone else got the job and no more are open.

But, in any plant, it will pay to anticipate needs and go about supervisory selection in an organized manner rather than to look at it as "getting a man for the new shift tonight." And for any opening, it will pay to look at the qualifications of more than one man.

#### GAINS THROUGH GOOD SELECTION

Planning and foresight will pay dividends. The whole purpose of this method of picking men to be trained as supervisors is to identify the steps that will inventory the abilities of workers, so that "hidden talent" is not overlooked. A man's appearance and manner may not be impressive, yet he may have excellent supervisory ability.

No one person in the plant can possibly have all of the essential facts necessary to make "spot" decisions regarding the potential abilities of a man. Two or three men, familiar with the problem and acquainted with the men available for promotion, can do a better job of selecting than one can alone. The judgment of one supplements the others.

A review of the record and a discussion of the needs and facts prevents hasty decisions. Men with supervisory ability can be found among rank-and-file workers. That is the major source of supply. The men who will make good supervisors are there. This method gives you a simple way to turn the searchlight on the group to find them.