

Lesson 6

Supervising



Key Terms

supervision
discipline
correction
motivation
teaching

What You Will Learn to Do

- Understand the components of leadership and explain how learning styles and preferences impact learning

Linked Core Abilities

- Take responsibility for your actions and choices
- Treat yourself and others with respect

Skills and Knowledge You Will Gain Along the Way

- Explain the role of discipline in leadership
- Describe examples of effective supervisory skills
- Define the key words contained in this lesson

Introduction

Effective leaders empower people, and empowered people achieve desired outcomes. Through clear communication, praise, and correction, effective leaders enable people to meet and exceed standards.

A good leader must be a teacher, coach, and counselor. Leaders must also be alert and aware of what's going on around them. By attending to details, a leader determines which standards are and aren't being met.

This lesson shows you how to become the best possible leader. It presents examples of effective supervision through direct leadership and considers the role of discipline.

Direct Leadership

When you think of a leader, you might imagine a person seated behind a big desk. Effective leaders, however, do much more than sit at a desk and sign documents. This lesson discusses direct leadership—a face-to-face, hands-on type of leadership style.

For an example of a leader, consider a school principal. A principal might have to wade through a fair amount of paperwork, but a vital part of his or her day is spent interacting with staff and students, parents, and members of the school board. To be an effective leader, he or she must have strong interpersonal skills and be able to communicate clearly. This principal must also listen well to gather clear data about the school and then analyze the data to determine what is and isn't working. By practicing direct leadership, the principal is involved, visible, and aware of what is happening in the school and with the student body.

Effective leaders also pay close attention to details. A leader must be alert and able to multitask to move fluidly and quickly from one task to another. Imagine a high school senior overseeing the yearbook staff. Some on his staff are graphic artists, working hard to develop a cohesive “look” for that yearbook. Other members are organizing the hundreds of portraits and ensuring that each yearbook picture coincides with the correct name. If these students are to produce a yearbook that doesn't leave out a single student and is visually attractive as well as consistent, the yearbook supervisor must maximize group performance. This requires attending to very different details, from the creative artwork to the names and pictures. When a leader sees what is or isn't being done well, he or she can provide praise or **correction**. Direct leadership involves coaching people to perform tasks on their own so they understand what is needed to achieve a specific outcome.

Remember that the ultimate goal of leadership is to produce independence. Too much **supervision** can undercut confidence; not enough supervision and the goal will likely not be met. An effective leader recognizes when someone is sufficiently skilled to attempt a task. Furthermore, an effective leader can fine-tune the amount of feedback that an individual needs and recognize when less supervision is required.

Consider this example: Your mother asks you to teach your seven-year-old brother to walk to his friend's house by himself. Your direct leadership task is to help him

Key Note Term

correction – to make or set right

Key Note Term

supervision – to have the charge and direction of; to oversee and direct; keep tabs on; keep an eye on; keep under surveillance

develop the skills he'll need, such as crossing the street safely, and also instill the confidence in him to accomplish this goal. If you follow him to his friend's house every time, you would undercut his confidence and, consequently, might impede his independence. If you just send him off without showing him the way, however, he might become lost and frightened and lose even more confidence. Obviously, effective direct leadership requires presence so that corrections can be tendered, such as "Don't just step into the street. Stop and look both ways." Being present also allows a leader to tender praise, such as "Hey, you remembered to stop and look. Great job!" Perhaps most important, effective leadership requires recognition of when someone is ready to attempt a task on their own.

Checking enables correction, and correction improves performance. Those improvements in performance promote independence. But how much checking serves learning? And when does checking undercut confidence? These are questions that only an aware leader can answer.

Learning Styles and Preferences

A leader's task is to lead team members to a state of mastery and independence. That way, standards of performance will be met regardless of conditions. This requires teaching and learning; however, because individuals learn in different ways, a leader must adjust to various learning styles. One person might prefer a detailed verbal explanation of what is expected; another person might learn best by simply seeing what is expected. Some people require more feedback than others. Some are comfortable making mistakes and learning from them. For others, learning is slowed by too many mistakes and too much criticism. To maximize learning, a leader must attend to the learning preferences of each student.

Here's an example: The captain of the volleyball team recognizes that the team will not achieve its full potential unless the freshmen fill vital roles. By working with her young teammates, she discovers that one girl performs best when she is pushed to excel. That girl responds to high expectations and firm coaching; however, a patient approach accelerates the learning of another player. A third girl learns best when the captain physically demonstrates appropriate form, and a fourth girl's learning is helped along by the captain taking the time to explain why one jumps and moves in a certain way.

In this example, the captain took the time to note the effects of different teaching techniques. After each practice, she analyzed the effectiveness of each technique and made changes as needed. By adapting to various learning styles, she maximized learning . . . and success.

Role of Discipline and Standards

As discussed earlier in this lesson, effective leaders develop confidence in those they supervise. Leaders also develop the skills that enable a group to achieve its mission, whether it's winning a football game or planning a vacation. Within a

Key Note Term

motivation – something that incites or has a tendency to incite to determination or action

group, each person has a task, whether it's catching a football or ensuring there is enough bottled water for the group. By supervising and teaching, leaders enhance performances, but leaders can't always be present because the diverse duties of leaders keep them from being everywhere they might like to be.

For example, the captain of a football team can't see everything on the field. If his team is to achieve its potential, the players must have **discipline**. Discipline is the desire and the will to do what one is expected to do, which serves as cohesion for the group and the group's mission. Discipline trumps selfishness, and compels a person to act in the best interest of the group and the group's goal.

Key Note Term

discipline – training that corrects, molds, or perfects the mental faculties or moral character

Note

General Dwight D. Eisenhower, quoting Lieutenant General Leslie J. McNair in 1941, said: "Our troops are capable of the best discipline. If they lack it, leadership is faulty."

Setting a Disciplined Example

As a leader, it is important that you learn self-discipline and be an example to your followers.

- Make certain that you arrive to appointments on time.
- Always look your best and be well-groomed.
- Stand straight and tall.
- Accomplish your goals to the best of your ability and in a timely manner.
- Take that extra step to ensure every detail is attended to and covered.

By adopting discipline in your own life, you set the standard and give your followers something to emulate.

Discipline empowers every member of a group. It also keeps a leader focused on details and delivering the supervision, correction, and instruction that people need to maximize their performance. Discipline within each member of a group develops independence and elevates effort.

Leaders insist on set standards. When leaders clearly convey what is needed and then offer feedback, the members of the group can ratchet up their performance until it meets or exceeds standards. Consider again the student overseeing his year-book staff. When he sees that one of his graphic artists has produced a page that is not up to the standard of the others, he must not let that page pass his approval. To do so undercuts cohesion and lowers the standard for future work. That student must correct and teach—and then praise when the standard is met.

Discipline is developed in the little things. A football captain who arrives on time, is well conditioned, and is ready to play is an example to the rest of the team. A football captain who arrives late and out of shape undercuts success, not only in his own performance but in the performance of the players that emulate him. Cohesion is served when each member of a team develops discipline. That discipline allows a linebacker to keep working out in the weight room when he'd rather be outside, hanging with his friends. Discipline throughout a group also develops confidence in each other. The linebacker will understand that even if he's alone in the

weight room, his teammates are running or drilling, and that all members of the team will come to a game prepared to play.

Note

General George S. Patton said, “Discipline is based on pride in the profession of arms, on meticulous attention to details and on mutual respect and confidence. Discipline must be a habit so ingrained that it is stronger than the excitement of battle or the fear of death.”

Supervising to Achieve Desired Results

Supervision is a vital aspect of communication. It means keeping a grasp on the situation by ensuring that subordinates properly perform their duties and implement unit plans and policies. Supervision includes the following:

- Setting the example
- Specifying the goal, objective, or standard
- Delegating authority/fixing responsibilities
- Coordinating efforts and activities
- Resolving conflicts with peers/subordinates
- Inspecting and evaluating
- Providing feedback

Oversupervision versus Undersupervision

There is a narrow line that determines the levels of adequate supervision. On one side of the line is oversupervision; on the other side is undersupervision.



Figure 4.6.1: Discipline includes the concept that everyone performs the same task in unison.

Courtesy of CACI.

Oversupervision can stifle initiative, make subordinates resentful, undermine trust, or undermine delegation of authority. On the other hand, undersupervision can lead to mission failure, especially in cases where the leader's intent was not fully understood, or where there was disorganization or a lack of coordination between units. Undersupervision can also make leaders look as though they do not care. Both extremes can lead to resentment and low morale.

Evaluating

Evaluating is a part of supervising that means judging the worth, quality, value, or significance of people, ideas, or things. Evaluation includes the following:

- **Looking at the way subordinates accomplish a task.**
- **Performing all types of firsthand checks and inspections.**
- **Assessing, gathering information, and asking subordinates questions.**
- **Obtaining feedback on how well something is being done.**
- **Interpreting feedback by asking: “Does the feedback indicate the plan will succeed?” or “Does it indicate the need for a modification or a major change in plans or policies?”**

Supervising Techniques

Supervising is the key to enforcing discipline. One of the most effective supervising techniques is on-the-spot correction. Very simply put, correction accelerates learning. It pinpoints where standards are not being met. A leader with strong interpersonal skills can correct learners in a way that maintains a strong self-concept, and strong self-concept promotes self-confidence.

To develop effective correction, you must subject yourself to analysis. At the end of a day you must ask, “Did my correction enhance performance? Did it promote independence?” If not, you should develop alternative forms of correction. Focus on acquiring those approaches that best serve the individual learning of those you oversee. Self-analysis is one way of taking responsibility for the choices you made that day. Self-analysis also improves your citizenship skills because it makes you more effective in a group, school, and community. Self-analysis also enables you to be a lifelong learner and, therefore, an ever more effective leader.

The following are positive steps in correcting:

- **Correct where it is needed.**
- **Focus on the performance, never the person.**
- **Give one correction at a time. Do not dump.**
- **Don't keep bringing it up; when the correction is over, it is over.**

Motivation

People who don't perform up to standards need correction. That correction should be precise and focus on what is wrong with the person's attempt to achieve a task, not what is wrong with the person.

People who achieve at or above standards should be praised; praise fosters motivation and confirms that a task has been completed according to standards. Praise also supports morale, cohesion, and discipline, and keeps a group focused and motivated.

When giving praise, always be precise and communicate exactly what is correct about a specific performance. Consider this example: A coach at a basketball practice shouts, "Good job out there! Keep it up!" That vague praise can confuse players. They might try to recall what they were doing right before the coach praised them, and they might even wonder if the coach was talking to them. But if the coach yells, "Good job of blocking out for rebounds, Katie and Leah," all the players understand what the coach wants, as well as who is meeting the standard and who isn't. Katie and Leah can acquire pride and further motivation from the coach's precise praise, and the other players can aspire to the coach's clear standard.

Teaching

As a leader, you also serve as a teacher, and you transfer knowledge through clear communication. An effective leader teaches in logical sequences, notes successes and failures, and provides feedback and praise. Effective leaders also teach by example through nonverbal cues. Because demonstration is an essential element of



Figure 4.6.2: Let your group know when they've performed well.

Courtesy of CACI.

Key Note Term

teaching – to cause to know something or to know how; to accustom to some action or attitude

teaching, you must be competent. Competency furthers the effectiveness of teaching because it demonstrates not only that you are entitled to teach, but you provide a role model for the members of the group.

The people that you lead need your guidance to achieve their potential. Ironically, achieving that potential means that one day, to a large degree, your learners will no longer need you. The end goal of leadership is to develop enough skill and confidence in individuals so they can operate largely without supervision. They will do so empowered with the tool of discipline and the precise understanding of what is expected of them.

Conclusion

If you hoard too much authority, the members of your group will never attain the competence and confidence that serve success. The measure of supervision will vary from person to person, but the desired outcome remains the same: to develop proficiency, pride, and confidence so that your team, whatever the circumstances, can achieve its goal through discipline, motivation, and cohesion.

The next lesson covers team development and additional leadership concepts. These concepts serve effective leadership. They also support group success.

Chapter 4

Lesson Review

Lesson Review

1. What is discipline and why is it important?
2. What are the roles of teaching and correction in leadership?
3. Why is praise effective?
4. Why is motivation important to a group?