

STAFF MEMBER AND SUPERVISOR

How The Staff Member Should Structure The Relationship

C. C. CRAWFORD, Consultant, Los Angeles; and WILBUR R. HANAWALT, Director, Management Development, Daystrom, Inc., Elizabeth, New Jersey

Here is a composite of what ten consultants and ten clients wrote down as the rules that should govern the consultant-client relationship. They wrote for about six minutes in a workshop sponsored by the American Society of Training Directors, at the 12th National Conference in New York City, April 30, 1956, under the guidance of Crawford.

Their recommendations have been reworded to apply to the relationship between staff member and line supervisor or foreman. This rewording was done by Hanawalt, who noted how similar the staff member's situation is to that of an independent consultant. They are not presented as ultimate truth, but as thought stimulators. It is hoped they will be as helpful to staff members as Crawford's original version was to consultants.

A. How to sell yourself to the line supervisor.

1. Communicate in the Supervisor's language. (Avoid technical jargon or pedagogue.)
2. Sell the basic idea of the value of advisory staff. (Promote the

staff idea as a whole, convince the supervisor of the value of advisory help as an approach before you sell your own methodology.)

3. Sell yourself well. (Must have supervisor's confidence. Practice empathy with supervisor and his personnel. Justify yourself, your service, your methods, your results.)
 4. Don't over-sell yourself. (Don't promise miracles. Don't claim more than you can do. Don't exaggerate. Sell the results you can honestly hope to get for him.)
- ### *B. How to diagnose the Supervisor's needs.*

1. Get prior knowledge of the supervisor. (Learn about his department before first meeting.)
2. Listen to his wants and his interpretations of his needs. (Let him talk. Listen and learn. Have open mind. Don't jump to conclusions. Get history of department. "Please tell me your situation.")

3. Dig deeper for the REAL problems and needs. (Check supervisor's basic assumptions. Verify problems from more than one person in department. Don't confuse symptoms mentioned by supervisor with his real problems. Allow for his subjectivity.)
4. Maintain a permissive atmosphere. (Don't obstruct thinking of those in supervisor's group. Open the doors. Invite and encourage free responses. Let others have ideas. Don't monopolize wisdom.)
5. Use a social or "friendship" approach. (Get to know supervisor well. Socialize AWAY from the business situation.)

C. *How to agree on the assignment.*

1. Define your own position. (Draft and present your program or proposal, and your concept of the project. Give good over-view. Retain your objectivity and independence, and even be controversial if necessary to be helpful, but be tactful in crossing supervisor's theories.)
2. Preserve strict objectivity. (Keep cool. Put truth above reputation or acceptance. Rely on facts and research. Think how supervisor looks to employees, management, and others, in addition to his own view of himself.)
3. Achieve a complete understanding or meeting of minds. (Define

what is to be done, how you are to operate, how the work will be terminated or extended.)

D. *How to manage the human relations.*

1. Avoid the "superiority" error. (Don't get into the "expert" role. Don't pretend to know more than supervisor or his personnel. Respect others' knowledge.)
2. Be on guard against internal stresses and tensions. (Work with all parties to internal struggles. Be a go-between. Bridge the gulfs. Protect sources of communication so as to maintain complete communication.)
3. Work with all persons or levels that are concerned. (Draw all affected parties into analysis of problem and into participation in its solution. Get supervisor to draw in others concerned with problem and give you status with them. Keep all persons and levels informed and sold on your work. "Market yourself" within the organization. (Get acceptance.)
4. Build up those through whom you work. (If a junior supervisor is insecure, build him up in the eyes of his boss. Give him credit for ideas developed. Transfer initiative to him. Build his prestige. Don't undercut anybody.)

E. *How to present the results.*

1. Make progress reports. (Give frequent verbal reports. Report periodically in writing.)

2. Test the reactions to your ideas while they are in the tentative stage. (Refrain from positive and direct statements. Ask supervisor's advice about proposals you are considering. Share the task of interpretation.)
3. Sell your conclusions and recommendations. (Don't try to *impose* your recommendations. Be "non-directive" but get supervisor conviction of wisdom of proposed actions.)
4. Make sure that actions are supervisor's, not yours. (Remain an adviser; don't become an executive. Supervisor must live with the results of decisions. He must take consequences. Consider possible repercussions, possible inability to execute plans that are good but difficult. Advise and sell your ideas but be sure supervisor actually "buys" them and believes in them.)
5. Get the recognition that is due you. (Get acknowledgment or credit for good outcomes of your efforts. You are entitled to recognition.)

IF some of the above ideas do not seem to be sound, or if some do not seem to agree with others in the outline, remember that these are presented objectively as received, and are not intended to be one man's integrated recommendation. Read each item as if it were in a true-false test. It was somebody's sincere advice. Also, if you feel that the list

was incomplete, remember that it was the result of a pinpointed target, and did not pretend to be a treatment of the whole scope of staff operations and techniques.

A worthwhile booklet for training directors is a symposium entitled *Development of the Individual in Business and Industry* published by the College of Commerce, State University of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa. It is conference report no. 4, of their Bureau of Labor and Management. Individualizing Training in Business by Dave Babcock; Motivation, Indoctrination, and Upgrading of New Employees by T. Lee, Jr.; Training in Creative Thinking by Walter J. Friess; and Training in Management Problem Solving by Raymond B. Och-sner are among the seven excellent articles.

* * *

The 1956 revision of *Selecting Supervisors* by Mandell and Greenberg was published in September. This fifty-four page soft cover booklet was prepared for use by the U. S. Civil Service Commission and treats with the supervisor's job and qualifications, selection methods, and administering a supervisory selection program. It contains numerous examples drawn from business and industry. May be purchased from the Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D.C. Price: 25c.