

BEHAVIORALLY-BASED SUPERVISORY DEVELOPMENT

*a procedural model
for program design
and development*

There is general agreement on the importance of utilizing behavioral principles in the development of company training programs. And there is a formalized method for doing this when the training program is limited to the acquisition of skills or knowledge. (Perform task analysis, perform behavioral analysis, establish terminal objectives, develop appropriate teaching materials, etc.). There is less agreement, however, when one asks the question, "How do you apply behavioral principles to help your supervisors become better managers?" This article presents a procedural model in answer to this question. The model is suggested as an approach that can be used by the training director as is, or which can be modified to conform to the organizational restrictions that may exist in the company.

TOP LEVEL COMMITMENT

To get the top level backing required, the training director starts by briefing the top level managers in the organizational unit over which he has jurisdiction for training. This briefing outlines the basic approach as follows:

1. A management-approved model of supervisory behavior would be developed as a basis for a supervisory development effort.
2. All levels of management would be requested to contribute to the development of the model. (The training department would work with representative managers and supervisors to develop a rough draft of the behavioral model.)
3. A final compilation of the desired behaviors that composed the model would be forwarded through channels for approval.
4. Once the behavioral model has been reviewed and approved by management, it is disseminated to all managers so they know the program objectives before the program is initiated. In addition, briefings would be held to further explain the program to all managers.

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PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

The great majority of behavioral objectives specified in the model would fall within the following areas:

General management activities; the ability of the supervisor to plan, direct, coordinate, etc. the work under his supervision.

Communications; the ability of the supervisor to interact effectively with his subordinates and superiors.

Human relations; the ability of the supervisor to deal with his employees on a psychologically sound basis.

Problem solving; the ability of the supervisor to work with his people in developing solutions to work-related problems.

Another major characteristic of the program (evident from the preceding paragraph) is that it would focus on the job situation. To illustrate some of the behavioral objectives, a sampling of several from each of the four areas above is given next. Please bear in mind that the particular management philosophy and style, as it exists within any specific company, is going to have a significant effect on what the actual objectives might be. For this reason the samples should not be used intact unless they are completely consistent with the management philosophy and style of a particular company. In addition, a basic assumption of this approach is that a training effort is likely to be most effective when all levels of management have participated in developing it and become involved in its success. I therefore advise against using the exact behaviors specified below.

SAMPLE ELEMENTS FROM A BEHAVIORAL MODEL

The following examples indicate what some typical objectives might look like within the setting of a professional office.

Area: General Management

The effective supervisor:

- a. finds out what work assignments are coming into his section

- b. develops a schedule for the completion of each work assignment
- c. discusses the schedule with the appropriate employee(s)
- d. gets employee agreement with the schedule
- e. schedules overtime work if necessary
- f. monitors the progress of work against the schedule
- g. guides employees in regard to difficult portions of the work
- h. advises his superiors of any unexpected delays in the work
- i. delivers most of the work out of the section on time
- j. etc.

Area: Communications

The effective supervisor:

- a. keeps employees informed on planned work changes that affect them
- b. elicits work-related ideas from employees
- c. listens carefully to employee complaints, and takes appropriate action
- d. gives employees constructive criticism on their performance (tells them how to improve)
- e. holds periodic section meetings to discuss work activities
- f. provides employees with sufficient information to do their jobs effectively
- g. etc.

Area: Human Relations

The effective supervisor:

- a. knows each employee well enough to treat him as an individual
- b. counsels employees on work-related problems
- c. tries to develop his employees by giving them challenging assignments
- d. compliments employees on good work and gives credit where it is due
- e. promotes the most capable individuals

- f. administers discipline fairly and privately
- g. keeps his promises to employees
- h. does what he can to improve employee morale
- i. gives out work assignments equitably
- j. etc.

Area: Problem Solving

The effective supervisor:

- a. recognises problems quickly
- b. discusses them fully with all involved
- c. looks for the underlying cause(s)
- d. determines whether he can and should handle the problem himself
- e. considers alternative suggestions and solutions
- f. discusses the possible solutions with those concerned
- g. selects the best solution
- h. implements the chosen solution with the cooperation of his employee (s)

PUTTING THE PROGRAM INTO ACTION

The first step to put the program into action is to brief the supervisors on its basic purpose and general characteristics. They should be told that the program is intended to improve their managerial capabilities and thus to make them more promotable. They should also be told how all levels of management cooperated to help develop the specified behavioral goals. They should then be shown copies of the behavioral model and the following program procedure should then be implemented.

1. Each man selects from the model those behavioral objectives he feels are appropriate to his own developmental needs.
2. Each man writes down these objectives and shows them to his superior who discusses the selections with him and indicates whether or not there are other behaviors (contained in the model) that should also be included

among the supervisor's objectives.

3. Each man and his superior come up with a mutually agreeable final set of objectives.
4. All final listings of these individualized objectives are forwarded to the training department. Each man notates his list to show how much training he feels he needs with respect to each objective.
5. The training department reviews the frequency with which each objective appears on the list along with the number of times it has been identified as a major training need by the supervisors.
6. Using the data thus gathered, the training department has a ready-made outline of topics to be covered in the seminar series which would be the backbone of this program. The training department also has a guide for determining the order of presenting each topic plus an indication of which supervisors should attend the various sessions.
7. The training department then decides what training media will be used within the seminars, what the instructional techniques will be, and how frequently the seminar sessions should be held.
8. An effective method for insuring the maintenance of the desired behaviors in the job situation is to make the model behaviors an integral part of the periodic performance review of the supervisors. (The form for reviewing the performance of the supervisors could be amended to add a section on how well the supervisor achieved his behavioral goals.) Note that this component of the performance review should also have a definite impact on the salary increase aspects of the review — and that all supervisors should be made aware of this relationship. Thus the company can demonstrate the sincerity of its intention to change on-the-job behavior by integrating this program with the performance review procedure and providing an appropriate mone-



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tary reward when the desired on the job behaviors are exhibited on a continuing basis.

CHECKLIST FOR PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

1. Develop model of desired supervisory behaviors.
2. Get top-level approval of behavioral model.
3. Disseminate approved model to all managers.
4. Present model to all supervisors.
5. Supervisors select appropriate individual performance objectives
6. Approved performance objectives are forwarded to the training department
7. Establish topical outline and schedule for the seminar sessions.
8. Design seminar sessions.
9. Conduct seminar sessions.
10. Establish system for checking out transfer of behaviors into the job situation.

CONCLUSION

What are the merits of this approach?

It focuses directly on end results—the desired on-the-job behaviors. It involves all levels of management in designing the program objectives and thus insures management's endorsement of the program. It allows supervisors to choose their own behavioral goals and thus increases their motivation to participate. It sets the stage for all levels of management to come to an agreement, or at least an understanding of approved supervisory behaviors. (A side benefit of this is that some organizations can use this approach to refine their philosophy of management and to develop a model of supervisory practices that is consistent with this philosophy.) And finally, since the performance objectives will be measurable and observable, it is possible to make an objective evaluation of the effectiveness of the program.