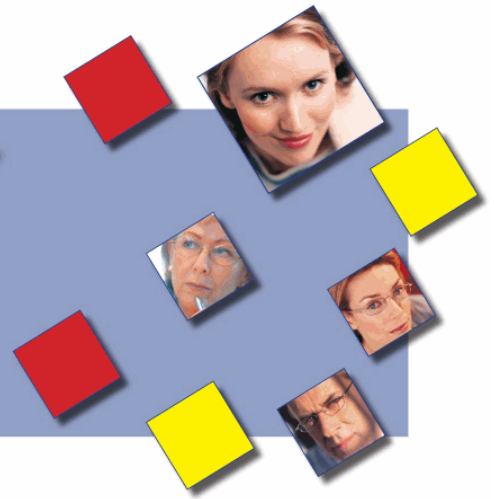


SUPERVISORY SKILLS QUESTIONNAIRE **ONLINE**

Third Edition



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REPORT DATE: August 18, 2009

Being a supervisor means that you can no longer do everything yourself. You are responsible for accomplishing the work of the organization through a group of people who might or might not be motivated to follow your lead.

Supervisory work requires a different set of skills than those you practice when you complete work by yourself. In this questionnaire you will have the opportunity to examine your own Supervisory Skills and work on ways to improve those skills so that you can get results and be successful.

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What It Means to Be a Supervisor

Today's supervisor plays a critical role. You are the link between your work group and the rest of the organization. This is sometimes a difficult place to be, sandwiched between the demands of your organization's management and customers, and the needs of your work group. Balancing these demands is what makes a supervisor effective.

Your work experience prior to becoming a supervisor may not have prepared you for this role. You probably were efficient in performing the day-to-day work that was required. But as a supervisor, you have to learn how to manage others to perform that work. In fact, you will be an ineffective supervisor if you continue to hold on to all the day-to-day tasks. You best serve your organization when you master the skills to develop your employees and create an environment in which they can meet the organization's goals.

The Supervisory Skills Model

As a supervisor, you use the direction of your organization to perform your job. You need it to guide your group's work. In order for your work group to accomplish the work, you must organize it, develop your staff, manage their performance formally and informally, and manage relationships with several groups outside your own group.

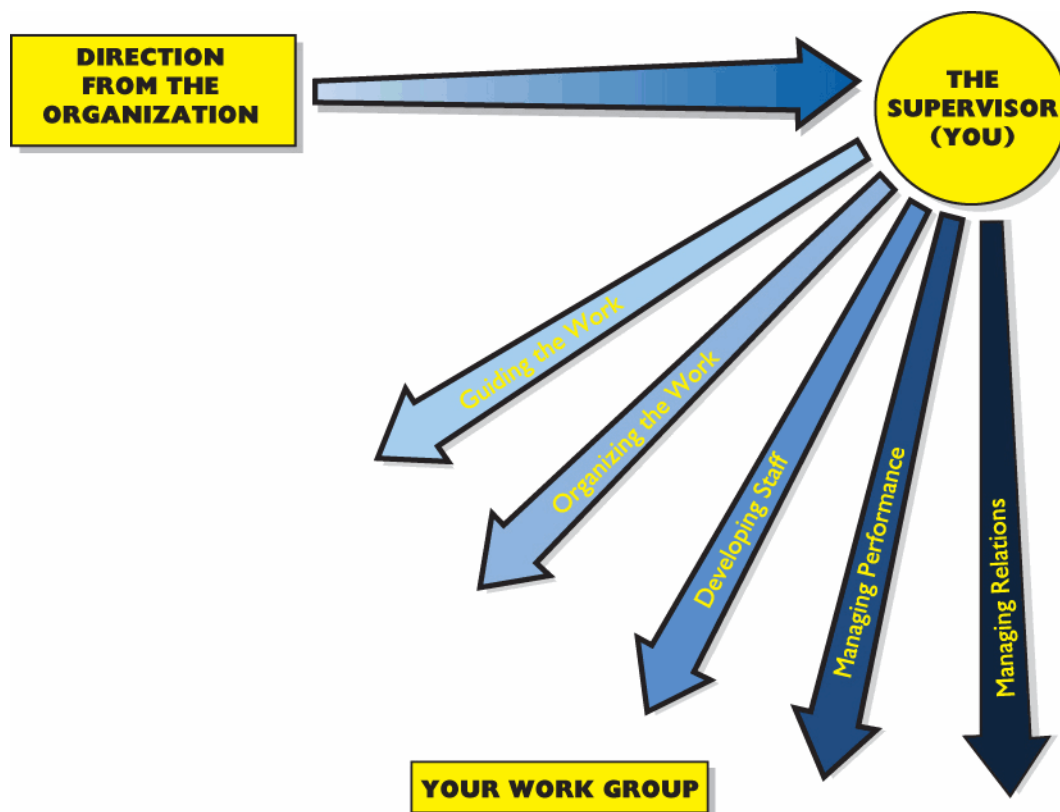


Figure 1: Supervisory Skills Model

Your Supervisory Skills Questionnaire Score

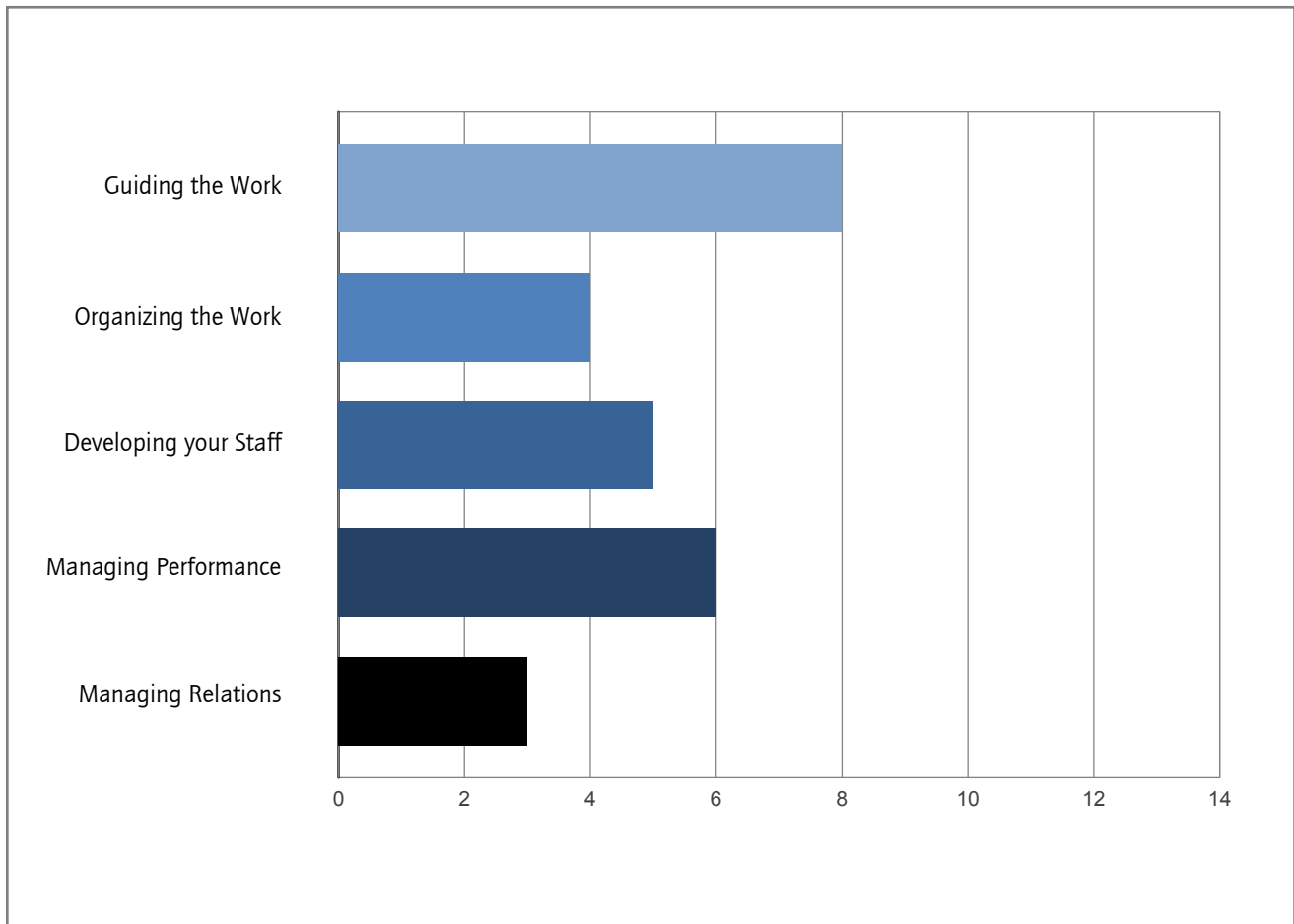


Figure 2: Your Supervisory Skills Chart

What Do My Scores Mean?

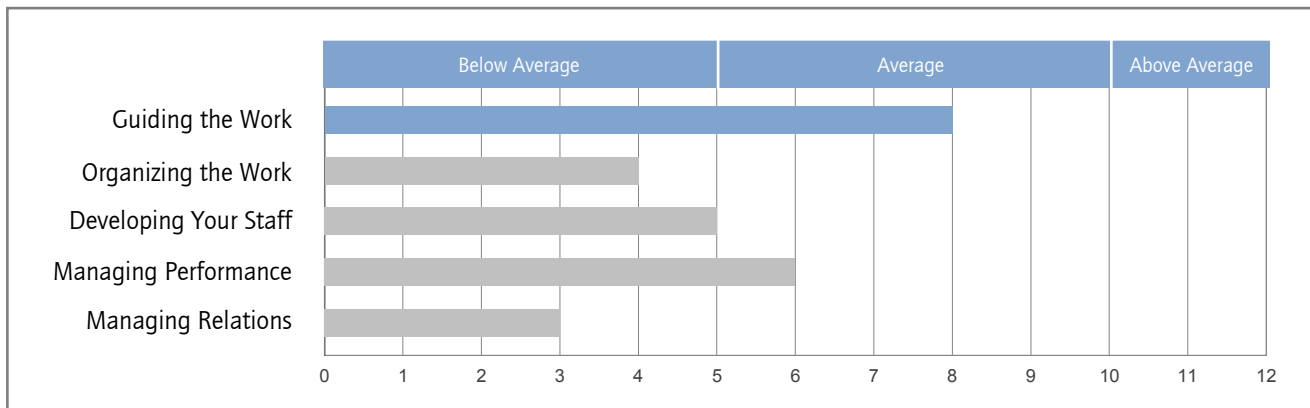
The Supervisory Skills in this Questionnaire represent the typical skills needed by a supervisor in today's work environment. By looking at your scores in each skill, you will get a good feel for the skills with which you are most comfortable and those that you probably want to work on.

Guiding the Work

Guiding the work means understanding what the needs of the organization are and planning your group's work effectively to meet those needs.

As a supervisor, you are responsible for knowing and understanding the demands of the organization and directing the work to meet those demands. Organizational demands can sometimes get lost in the day-to-day work of meeting your group's needs. In fact, there are times when you are not going to agree with a decision made by management. You should voice those concerns to management, preferably before the decision is final.

Your Guiding the Work Score:



You scored **8 on Guiding the Work**, which indicates that you probably understand what is necessary to decisively translate the organization's goals into workable plans.

The table below outlines actions to take (and not to take) when **Guiding the Work**.

In Guiding the Work...

Do	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support the organizational goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telling employees that you disagree with management positions.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get your employees involved in the planning process. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consistently preparing detailed plans without consulting your employees.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Act decisively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Putting off making decisions until you are sure that they are perfect.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make plans with specific progress review dates. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failing to assign responsibility for tasks.

Tips for Improving Your Skills in Guiding the Work:

- **Supporting the Organization** - Even when you don't agree with a management decision, it is still your responsibility to carry out the decision with your work group. And it is also your responsibility to make it clear to your employees that you and they are going to give management your full support. It is tempting to say, "Look, I don't agree with this, but it's an order from management." This type of statement is damaging to the organization and to your work group. Your employees will feel as if the work they are doing is not worthwhile, and you will have set up an "us vs. them" situation between your work group and management.
- **Providing Direction in Unfamiliar Areas** - Providing direction can feel particularly uncomfortable when you need to make a decision in an unfamiliar area. Although this is bound to happen, it is not a reason to avoid making decisions. The people who work for you are going to look to you for guidance. They will want to have confidence in your abilities to lead them. There are two potentially dangerous ways to act in this type of situation. One is to feel that you must have all of the information available so that you don't make a mistake. In this case, you can become paralyzed by indecision. The second way is to make a decision without gathering information because you don't want to look like you don't know what you are doing. In this case, you will probably make a poor decision. There is a happy medium in which you ask for information from people with experience and then you act decisively. With this technique, you may still make some mistakes, but they will be fewer and your employees will see that you have the confidence to lead.
- **The Importance of Planning** - Your ability to guide your employees will be greatly enhanced by good planning. Planning is determining *in advance* what needs to be done, who should do it, and how it should be done. Planning is a key part of your job because without it your group will lack resources, fail to understand its work, and in the end be ineffective. One major reason planning is so crucial is that during completion of a task, you can lose sight of your original goals and let your emotions rule your decisions. You tend to be more objective and rational at the beginning of a task than in the middle of it. If you plan for different circumstances up front and commit to scheduled progress reviews, you are more likely to keep your work on track. Concrete plans help you to fight the natural, but unwise, tendency to keep all of your options open.
- **How to Plan** - The keys to good planning are being specific, being realistic, and getting commitment. Your plans should include specific objectives and dates to reach those objectives. The plans should also be specific about who will complete what task. Assigning a task to everyone in general does not work. You should get commitment at the start from those who will have responsibility for a task. The process of planning should include the active involvement of those who work for you. When people are involved in planning their work, they have a greater commitment to completing the work. As simple as this sounds, it can be overlooked by supervisors. It is not enough to just take the needs of your employees into consideration in planning. They should feel that they have assisted in the planning process. In fact, a perfectly good decision, that by all logical standards meets the needs of a group of people, can fail miserably only because those people were not consulted on the decision.

Development Questions for Guiding the Work

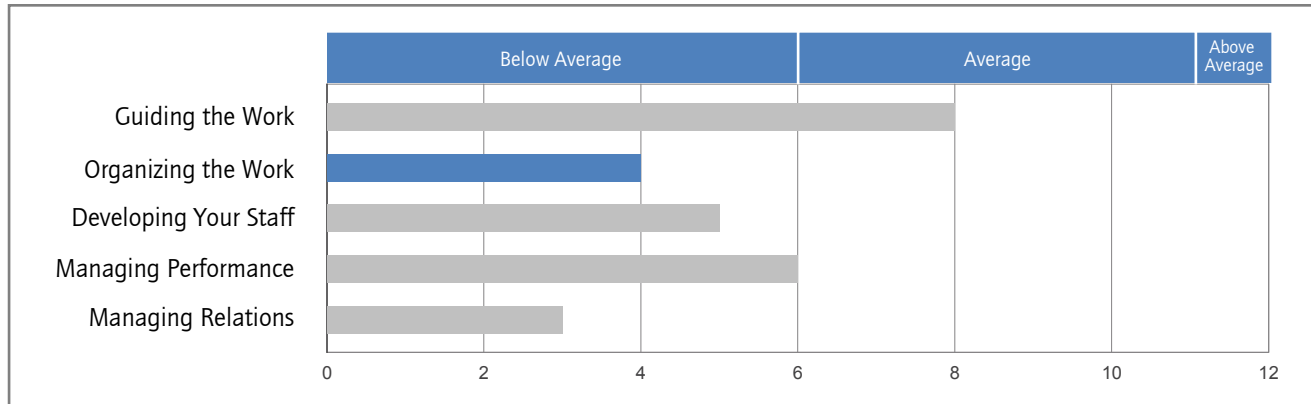
1. What are the important goals of the organization that you can use to guide your group's work?
2. Who can you turn to when you need help making a decision?
3. Think about a task your group is about to handle. What are the results you expect and how will you check progress?
4. How can you get the people who work for you involved in the planning process?

Organizing the Work

Organizing the work involves assigning people and allocating resources to accomplish work goals.

Even the best made plans need attention as work progresses. There is an almost constant need to assess priorities and assign work. As with guiding, the organization of the work should be consistent with the overall goals of the organization. But, you also have to balance that with the needs of your work group members.

Your Organizing the Work Score



You scored 4 on Organizing the Work, which indicates that you might need to become more familiar with how to handle the task assignments, set priorities, and assign resources.

The table below outlines actions to take (and not to take) when **Organizing the Work**.

In Organizing the Work..

Do	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set schedules to meet the organization’s goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Accepting work changes without question.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use others’ expertise to organize when necessary. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Showing favoritism or failing to assign unpleasant
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep track of what’s going on in the informal organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Failing to assign responsibility for necessary tasks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Involve others if you have to reorganize. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trying to have complete knowledge of all aspects of the work.

Tips for Improving Your Skills in Organizing the Work:

- **Handling Shifting Priorities** - Priorities often shift in work. In times of constant change, it is not unusual for a new task or project to appear suddenly and interfere with your plans. Fitting unexpected tasks into your work group schedule can be tricky. How you handle requests from others is a skill that involves some creativity. Handling new work assignments depends a lot on who is requesting a shifting of priorities. You are the one who is closest to the work of the group and aware of all of the tasks the group has to complete. You should not assume that anyone else has that level of knowledge. If your immediate boss or manager makes a request to take on a new assignment, you may want to clarify with him or her where it should fall in terms of priorities. Although your boss is close enough to the work to understand its priorities, it is not his or her job to keep track of them. If you remind him or her of priorities, he or she may be able to judge how the new assignment should fit in. Beyond requests from your immediate boss, deciding whether to fulfill requests for a new assignment or to shift priorities becomes a little harder. Upper management does not need to hear about all of your other work. You may want to enlist the help of your boss in determining what is crucial and what is not under those circumstances.
- **Dealing with Unexpected Problems** - In addition to shifting priorities, your group's work will often get slowed or even stopped due to unforeseen problems. It is your job to quickly investigate problems and work to solve them. If time is short and the project is stopped, getting everyone together may be the best way to find out what is going on. You may have to reorganize the work depending on what is causing the problem. If this happens, make sure you get the group's input and commitment to any new plans.
- **Organizing Work without Complete Knowledge of the Work** - Organizing work can be a challenge, particularly when you are not completely familiar with the work you are organizing. Changes in the workplace, particularly in technology, make it difficult to keep completely up-to-date on work processes. Realistically, it would be impossible for you to have complete knowledge of all of the work processes of your group. You will find that not working on the day-to-day tasks causes you to lose some of your expertise. This should not stop you, however, from being able to organize work. It simply means that you have to consult with your employees, who know the technology and tasks in detail, in order to organize the work.
- **Following the Rules** - Part of organizing the work is ensuring that you follow the procedures and rules of your organization. A supervisor today often has to struggle with the constraints of regulations, organizational rules, and government guidelines. It is crucial that you uphold these rules, because no matter what your judgment is of them, there are often legal reasons why you must comply.
- **Keeping Your Work Group in Mind** - There is some danger that you will go overboard in organizing the work according to the organization's goals. It is easy to lose sight of the needs of your employees when you begin to focus on the bigger organizational picture. With each decision you make you should take a moment to consider how it affects your group. When you can, and when it is not in direct conflict with the organization's priorities, accommodate the needs of your group.
- **The Informal Organization** - Within organizations and work groups you will find both formal organizations (the organizational chart) and informal organizations (operating behind the scenes). The informal organization includes unappointed leaders who everyone else follows regardless of their formal authority. Dealing with these leaders is important to organizing your work. What unappointed leaders do can contribute greatly to whether your work group follows your plans. The best way to deal with the informal organization is to acknowledge it and let it go. Trying to change or fight informal leaders will only cause you stress and make you ineffective. The key is to know enough about what is going on in the informal organization to anticipate problems and deal with them.

Development Questions for Organizing the Work

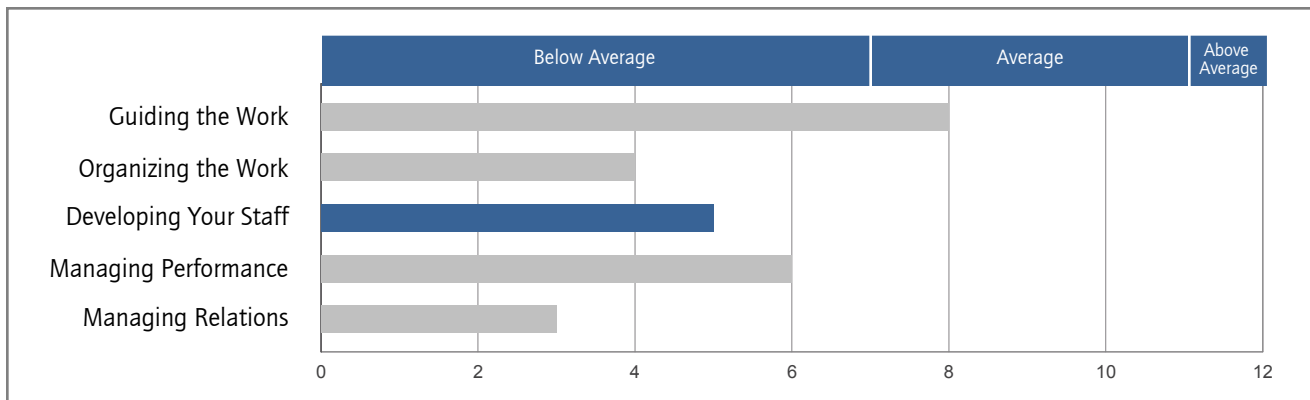
1. What actions could you take if work on a task stopped?
2. What can you do to become familiar with the work that is being done by your group?
3. What are the important rules and procedures that your group has to follow?
4. Who are the informal leaders in your group and how can you handle them?

Developing Your Staff

Developing your staff involves increasing the skill level of each employee by learning his/her strengths and assigning tasks according to development need.

The people who work for you are your key to success. It is by developing them that you and the organization succeed now and in the future. Your ability to develop your employees is based on a strong knowledge of each of them. You need to understand their abilities as individuals, rather than as a group. Once you know them individually, it makes developing their abilities much easier.

Your Developing Your Staff Score



You scored 5 on **Developing Your Staff**, which indicates that you may not have a good grasp of how and when to delegate work or juggle the development needs of your people with the other priorities you have.

The table below outlines actions to take (and not to take) when **Developing Your Staff**.

In Developing Your Staff...

Do	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set schedules to meet the organization’s goals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Completing tasks yourself because they require effort to teach others.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get to know employees on an individual basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treating employees as a group rather than as individuals.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep employees informed about the status of their requests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Forgetting to tell employees about the status of their request.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make your expectations for results clear when you delegate tasks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delegating only to people who already have the skill for the task.

Tips for Improving Your Skills in Developing Your Staff:

- **Delegating** - One of the key ways to develop your employees is to delegate work to them. When you delegate, you still maintain the ultimate responsibility for the task, but others complete the work. Deciding what to delegate and to whom is an important Supervisory Skill. It is often difficult to delegate because you are used to doing the work yourself and may have difficulty letting go. It also takes effort to delegate work. You need to teach another person how to perform the work and check to ensure that it is being completed adequately. The biggest barrier to delegation is the feeling that it takes too much time to do it. You should avoid this trap. Time invested now will free you up to complete other work that will develop your skills.
- **Knowing What to Delegate** - You should delegate the work that does not require your formal authority and that will help to develop the skills of your employees. The best employee to delegate to in a given situation is the one who: a) needs development and b) is willing to be developed. The temptation to delegate work only to those who already have the ability to do the work should be avoided. When you know your employees well, you will be able to find development opportunities for each one.
- **Knowing How to Delegate** - When you delegate work to employees, it is important to provide them with a clear statement of the results you expect when the delegated task is completed. You do not need to constantly monitor the actions of the person you delegated to or even show him or her exactly what you would do to complete the task. Doing so would not allow the person to develop his or her skills. What you should do is set up regular progress checks and make sure that the employee understands what is expected.
- **Setting Goals** - Set goals with your employees that challenge them, but are not impossible to meet. Your knowledge of each of your employees will help you know if a goal is too easy or too difficult. If it is too easy, there will be no sense of satisfaction when the goal is met. Extremely difficult goals will frustrate your employees.

Development Questions for Developing Your Staff

1. Can you name at least one skill strength of each of the people you supervise? If not, how will you find out what their skill strengths are?
2. What tasks can you delegate now?
3. State a challenging goal for each of your employees.

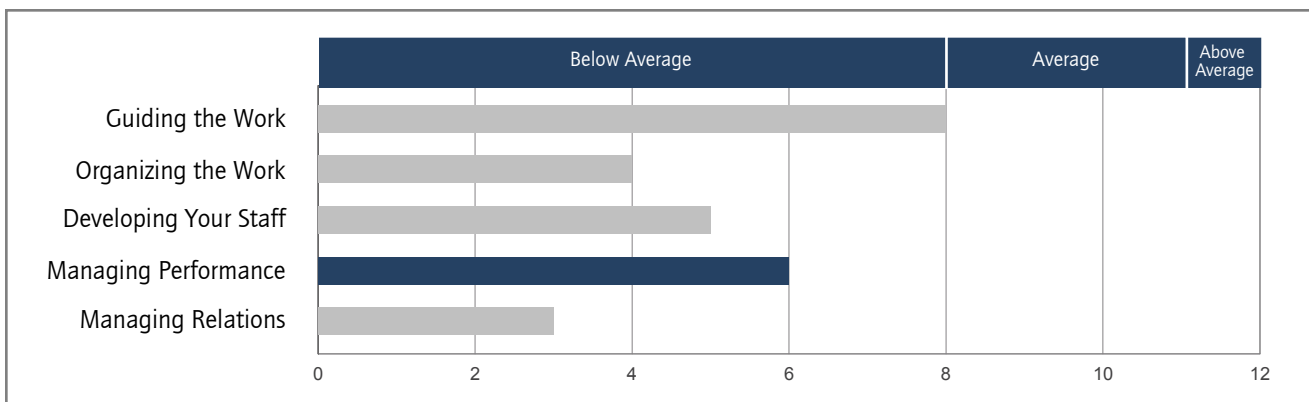
Managing Performance

Managing performance includes tracking the performance of your employees and helping them to meet their own objectives and those of the organization.

People’s performance contributes to the bottom line of the organization and the organization’s goals. All performance issues, whether positive or negative, need to be viewed in that light and judged by their effect on the organization.

As with Developing Your Staff, your ability to manage performance will be greatly increased by your knowledge of the people who work for you. The best way to assess performance is to talk individually and often with your employees. It is important that you and your employees agree on their performance and commit to improve it. The best management occurs when employees feel involved and committed to tracking their own performance.

Your Managing Performance Score



You scored 6 on Managing Performance, which indicates you might not know when to use more formal approaches to handle performance issues and when to be more informal.

The table below outlines actions to take (and not to take) when **Managing Performance**.

In Managing Performance...

Do	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Track performance and provide feedback on a continual basis. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reviewing performance only once a year.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judge performance by how it affects the organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Judging employees before you talk with them about their performance.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remain objective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Allowing yourself to become emotional.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Get commitment from employees to improve their performance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to fix every problem, no matter how small.

Tips for Improving Your Skills in Managing Performance:

- **How to Manage Performance** - Managing performance can be accomplished in three simple steps: (1) tell people what you expect of them, (2) monitor their progress and provide feedback, and (3) formally evaluate their performance. Perform these steps on an ongoing basis with your employees. Too many supervisors view managing performance as a once-a-year performance review. But effective performance management occurs every day. It involves not only formal reviews, but ongoing coaching and counseling.
- **Coaching** - Coaching your employees is an on-going process of keeping track of their progress and discussing it regularly. A large part of coaching is clearly stating your expectations for their performance and checking for agreement. Coaching also involves providing your employees with suggested actions to improve their performance.
- **Performance Problems** - When an employee's performance is not meeting your expectations, it is best to deal with the performance issue as soon as it occurs. This is not always easy. You may view it as an unpleasant task and put it off. But the longer you wait, the longer the poor performance persists and potentially affects work, and the worse the situation becomes. When you discuss performance with an employee, you need to be specific about his or her behavior and make it clear what can be improved. It is also essential that you remain objective during any performance discussions. You need to hear the employee's perspective on the situation and, if at all possible, come to agreement about his or her performance. At the end of the discussion both you and your employee should have clear expectations about how he or she will improve and be committed to specific actions.
- **Minor Problems** - Not all behavioral problems are serious performance issues. Sometimes one of your people may create minor irritations for you and your group. When this is the case, handling the problem informally may be the best option. Even though you will want to fix every problem, realistically you cannot. An effective supervisor learns how to distinguish between problems that need attention because they have an effect on the performance of the group and those that do not.
- **Behind-the-Scenes Problems** - The most difficult performance issues are those that you can't see, those that go on behind the scenes when you are not looking. You may have an employee who spreads rumors, purposely slows work, tells you one thing and their peers another, etc. You must use your judgment in dealing with these issues. It is best to judge each instance according to whether it is affecting the work of the group and the ability of the organization to meet its goals. To a certain extent, you cannot stop behind the scenes action (sometimes called the informal organization). If someone's actions are affecting performance, however, then you should confront this person. Point out how the actions affect results, instead of focusing on your personal feelings.

Development Questions for Managing Performance

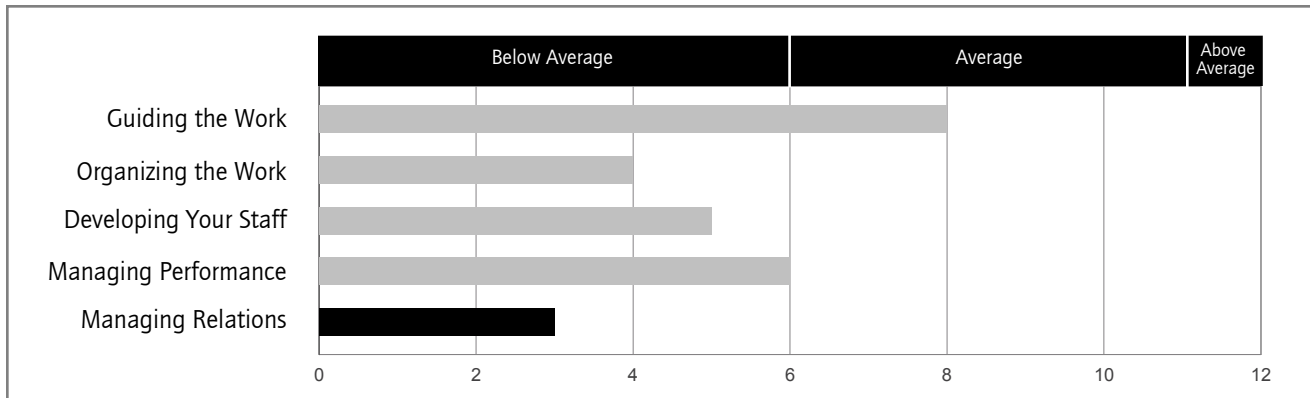
1. How can you let your employees know what results are expected from them?
2. How can you give feedback about performance to your employees?
3. What kind of behavior problems can you let go because they are not worth fixing?
4. How can you get employees' commitment to improve their performance?

Managing Relations

Managing relationships with other groups is critical to ensuring that your work group is effective and that organizational goals are met.

Your work group is surrounded by other groups who affect its work. Learning to manage relations with those groups is critical if you want to get your group the resources they need and ensure that they have the freedom to complete their work.

Your Managing Relations Score



You scored 3 on Managing Relations, which indicates that you may have difficulty judging when or how to work with other groups.

The table below outlines actions to take (and not to take) when Managing Relations.

In Managing Relations...

Do	Avoid
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Keep other groups informed about your plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to acquire resources by complaining about your group's situation.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider others' requests for help based on the needs of the organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Trying to have complete knowledge of other groups' work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Become generally familiar with other groups' work. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Turning down all requests for help that inconvenience your group.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop relationships with other supervisors. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accepting work from other groups without question.

Tips for Improving Your Skills Managing Relations:

- **Keeping Other Groups Informed** - As with the other Supervisory Skills, managing relations with other groups should be guided by the goals of the organization. You should view your relationship with other groups as partnerships in which you both have the opportunity for gain. Working with other groups inside and outside of the organization will be much easier if they know what your needs are well in advance. When you plan your work, you should inform any groups that are affected by it. When problems or changes arise, other affected groups should be notified immediately. Making requests with little warning or explanation will not only make it difficult for other groups to shift their work for you, but it will build resentment and damage relationships.
- **Acquiring Resources** - One of your supervisory tasks is acquiring resources for your group such as additional staff or equipment. To do so, you must have the skill to convince others outside of your group to provide those resources. When you frame your requests according to what is good for the organization, rather than your own work group, you are more likely to be successful. Keeping the big picture in mind can be challenging when your day-to-day work is focused on your work group needs. Although those needs and the organization's needs certainly don't have to clash, you should be careful to focus on the organization rather than on your group.
- **Getting Support from Other Groups** - Often you will rely on others outside your group for support. Support groups include human resources, technical support, maintenance, etc. Your group can benefit if you have good relations with these support groups. With rapidly changing technology and more complicated laws and regulations, it would be impossible for you to have complete knowledge of every facet of work. But you do need to have enough knowledge to work closely with your support groups and know what to ask of them and when.
- **Handling Requests from Other Groups** - Your group will also be on the receiving end of requests for work from other groups inside and outside of the organization. When you respond to work requests, you have to weigh several factors, including the workload of your group, the relationship with the requesting group, and the organization's goals. The organization's goals should take precedence over any other reason for accepting work. So for example, if another supervisor approaches you and asks you to work on a project, your first question should be, "How does that fit into the organization's overall plan?"
- **Relationships with Other Supervisors** - Maintaining good relations with other supervisors within the organization is particularly beneficial. They can provide you with help, information, and occasionally an ear for your problems. It is through your network with other supervisors that you gain access to what is really going on in the organization. This benefits your group and allows you to make more informed decisions.

Development Questions for Managing Relations

1. What organizational groups are most important to the success of your group?
2. How can you maintain good relationships with those other groups?
3. What resources does your group really need and how will you get them?
4. How can you learn about the work of other groups in the organization?

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