

IMPLEMENTATION OF TRAINING FOR FIRST-LINE SUPERVISORS AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF MENTORSHIP PROGRAMMES FOR SUPERVISORS IN THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

ABSTRACT

Need for initiative: The initiative of this study was to identify the dimensions and the determinants in developing and establishing the level of competency of first line and middle management. Continuous observation of sub-standard work is experienced and very little, and little corrective action is taken resulting in ever declining maintaining of standards. In the current construction environment, the need for advanced time, cost and quality components projects is a concern and a major determinant is that of trained and capable manpower resources in the different labour categories.

Originality / Purpose: The aim of this paper is to identify problems related to the results of non-conformances on construction projects. The focus is experienced at a petrochemical installation where ongoing civil and building maintenance, and project work is performed by various contractor categories. Although many associations, councils, construction- and training bodies concern themselves with the positioning and development of supervisory personnel, this research will clearly identify the major determinants for future development.

Method / Processes: A survey by means of personal communication was conducted and presented to respondents for the purpose of measuring basic statutory and quality expectations. The study was also based on a literary review of the writings of researchers in the field.

¹ Postgraduate student at the University of the Free State

² Professor at the University of the Free State

Lessons Learned: Efficient supervision is of great value in enhancing the product quality and cost results, within the time framework and providing strength to people abilities to grow and improve. A significant finding is that due to the fact that a shortage of skills exists, more effort is required to train and improve the abilities of workers.

Results: The research in this paper identified the following components of influencing the need and awareness of supervision: Quality management, skills enhancement, site organization, resource allocation, communication.

Value / Measure of success: Realising the importance of effectively managing people at a lower level in an organization where skills are not developed to execute the work satisfactorily.

Different approach: The results projected a general misconception from the respondents regarding the effort of training supervisors in the operational environment. A different approach would be to interview the workers to establish their requirements what is being expected from a direct supervisor.

Beneficiaries: The employers, training authorities and professions may benefit from this study. Further study in this field should be continuous and structured.

Key words: Mentoring, performance, development, training and education, paradigm.

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INTRODUCTION

It is an established agreement that if people's skills can be upgraded, everyone is better off (Suzaki, 1993:1). As the skill level improves, there should be less problem solving. More problems will be solved at the source, and communication will be more enhanced among people which will make it possible to get things done more quickly and efficiently.

On the construction terrain, it is the place where the fundamental, value added activities, take place. It is also an industry where people start their careers by learning to get things done, to solve problems, and to work with others.

With the construction industry currently in a high performing wave, the need for skilled workers and especially supervisors increases exponentially. New initiatives by authorities are being introduced, this may take a considerably longer period to identify the expected success.

OVERVIEW OF PROBLEMS

Introduction

The volatility and nature of the construction environment leans itself to the uncertainty and difficulty of resource management, together with the continuous changing requirements of authorities and economic conditions.

Competencies

The criteria of performance identified for this study are *superior performance* and *effective performance*. Only some competencies can be identified for this study. Competencies are divided into threshold of surface, which are minimally effective, where core competencies are superior from average performers.

Definitions:

Threshold/surface (minimally effective) competencies are:

Knowledge – content information, the theoretical paradigm of *what to do*.

Skills – ability to perform a task, the *how to do*.

Core competencies (distinguishing superior from average) are:

Self-concept – values, aptitude, attitude, self image.

Traits – self-confidence, team player, handling ambiguity.

Motives – focus on excellence, continuing organizational and personal integrity

(Smallwood. 2006: 66 & 67).

Causes

Table 1 illustrates the key concerns of associated problems and areas where initial skills improvement needs to be addressed and the lack of proper supervision is experienced:

Table 1: Basic concerns

Key concerns	Problems
<i>Basic skills</i> are missing, e.g., reading, Math, linguistic abilities – in general: Education.	Someone else has to do the work and rectify the problems - it may happen that management does not pay any attention to the growth of the people simply as "bodies" that extend as machinery.
No clear definition of requirements: Inspection standards.	Supervisor must be called every time a problem arises that is unclear. Time is wasted and often poor decisions may be made, thus creating further difficulties. If a supervisor is not available, the decision will be made by unskilled and semi-skilled workers, lacking the ability to.
Lack of <i>discipline</i> to follow set standards, e.g., housekeeping, workplace organization, work level standards.	Extra work is created: Rework Support positions - janitorial work Unnecessary fire-fighting <i>Here, problems may be repeated over and over</i>
<i>Inflexibility</i> in meeting changing demands	Unskilled people cannot cope with changing demands, Self control ability is missing. This may generate waste in more external sources of computers, consultants, machinery, etc.

Source: Suzuki (1993:23)

Results

One of the most important issues that is raised are that of the issue; “health and safety”. The adoption of *Health and Safety* as a value, instead of a priority, is a prerequisite for addressing and improving the figures quoted during 2005 (Smallwood, 2005:3).

A total of 4587 temporary total disablements, 315 permanent disablements and 137 fatalities were reported to the Compensation Commissioner in South Africa. This equates to 1 in 102 temporary disablement workers, 1 in 1041 permanent disablements, and 1 fatality for every 3925 workers. The Disabling Injury Incident Rate (DIIR) of 0.98 means that 0.98 workers per 100 incurred disabling injuries, with the industry average of 0.78 (Smallwood, 2005:3)

The number of fatalities among the workers insured by the Accident Fund (AF) is the equivalent of a fatality rate of 25.5 fatalities per 100 000 full-time equivalent construction workers, which does not compare favourably by international standards (Smallwood, 2005:3).

Table 2 illustrates the impact on project success, and what the results could be. In a modular environment, every opportunity should be used to improve and fit systems to counter losses. Not only does it affect the stability of the organization, but the socio-economic environment is also affected. Continuous improvement, sustainability, people and growth in every facet needs to be carefully controlled and promoted to provide the required excellence. In the table, *impact* relates to the core values of an organization.

Table 2: The impact of the lack of supervision on a company's business

Impact	Result
Quality	Needing to add <i>additional resources</i> for inspection so that defects are not handed to customers.
Cost	Additional resources include not only inspectors, but also expeditors . . . managers to put out fires!
Schedule	It takes <i>longer</i> to get things done, scheduled delivery dates may be over-run, increasing the risk of paying penalties.
Safety	People's safety and environmental concerns may <i>not be identified</i> as of the deviation resolution nature of the operation.
Morale	Continuous deviation resolution and the lack of communication affects morale.

Source: Suzuki (1993:23)

THE CONCEPT OF SUPERVISION

Introduction

The role of supervisors is important to any development and training environment, for this reason the training of supervisors should be adequately addressed in terms of duration and quality. A culture of ongoing training may enhance the construction process and add positive value to the project success. The cultural change should be a process that offers an alternative to the current culture while not creating a void where a new culture has to be built from scratch.

The role of coaching, training and mentoring in respect of supervision allows the incumbent to participate in a program, whether on-the-job, or more formally, of skill- and educational orientation.

To define coaching, training and mentoring, the following definitions should suffice:

Coaching, originating from sport, is the systematically planned and direct guidance of an individual or a group of individuals by a coach to learn and develop specific skills that are applied and implemented in the workplace, and therefore translates directly to clearly

defined performance outcomes that are achieved over a short period of time (Meyer & Fourie, 2004:5).

Training, originating from education, is providing skills, to employees so that they can do their jobs more efficiently (Meyer *et al.* 2004:7).

Mentoring, originating from mythology is the dynamic and reciprocal relationships in a work environment whereby a more advanced and wise career incumbent (mentor) helps a less experienced person who has development potential (mentee) develop in some specified capacity, over a period of time (Meyer *et al.* 2004:8).

The role of the supervisor

The first-level supervisor is the link between the rank-and-file employees (ordinary members of the organization) and middle management. The supervisor must have certain general knowledge of the company and its services as well as the technical knowledge to accomplish many of the assigned jobs, whether in a specific discipline, or process (Halloran & Frunzi, 1986:5). The supervisor should be able to manage people in an efficient manner that is acceptable to them as well as to the supervisor's superior. As a person moves up in the supervisory ladder, he or she will spend less time performing physical tasks and more planning and coordinating.

The human aspect of a supervisor's job commands staffing (job qualification), interaction with people remains one of the most critically important elements of any supervisor's job. The remaining is directing, controlling, planning and organizing, which is distributed according to need and requirements of the project. Power and authority greatly influence the supervisor's job (Halloran & Frunzi, 1986:5).

The managerial qualifications for the supervisor's position are too often neglected, and a person is made a supervisor without having been prepared, and a manager without having been trained, instead of running the department, will be run by it (Halloran & Frunzi, 1986:5).

There could be significant advantages to a general approach to supervision, which means giving general information on how to perform a task without specifying how to execute every detail. Adding to this, a supervisor's detailed decisions is not likely to be as good as those of his or her employees, since the employees on the job are usually closest to the problems. General supervision motivates employees to take more pride in results of their own decisions.

ANALYTICAL APPROACH TO TRAINING OF SUPERVISORS

Introduction

In organizations employing technical personnel, there appears to be little attention paid to making the supervisor aware of the overall manpower policy of the organization except where that policy is not to recruit or replace staff. It is usual practice for replacement staff to be appointed to the same grade as their predecessor or held as a trainee against that grade, or in the case of new posts, for the appointment to be made against a job description written down to a grade in job evaluated structures rather than on the basis of the actual need (Weston, *et al*, 1989:99).

An approach to training, or technical education, needs may be implemented to act as guide for the organization. This would alter from organizations and a careful analysis of the post grade should be considered to cater for further needs (Weston, *et al*, 1989:102).

To place this into perspective, the following systematic approach could be followed during the training of supervisors:

- Organizational objectives, how the organization works and what the goals are.
- Job analysis, each step and detail is to be examined.
- Job description and grading. Purpose and working of classification.
- Introduce internal applicants to the leader group.
- Recruit and select – recruit external applicants.
- Identify individuals' training and career objectives..
- Training of the trainer.

- Plan, implement and monitor training. Allow for adjustments during the process.
- Evaluate training and introduce additional training if necessary.
- Plan and introduce training for new techniques and career development.
- Encouraging people to upgrade their skills (Suzaki, 1993:127). Technology calls for the ongoing upgrade of skills.

The advantage of in-house supervisory courses is that they can be tailored to the precise needs of the organization, or to the needs of management. Such courses may offer a greater degree of flexibility, can be offered as part of career progression, and need to be controlled by staff to student ratios (Weston, Grimshaw & Norton, 1989:134).

There is often a problem in convincing management that a need for supervisory training is needed whether provided in-house or through examining bodies. It was found that personal effectiveness training was the largest need perceived by such staff, with additional needs for updating and problem analysis in technical areas (Weston, *et al*, 1989:150).

Connected with career development is the whole issue of training. Most people recognize that they may not have all of the skills, knowledge, or attributes needed to move ahead in the organization to positions they might like to have, but there should be a process that will need to give them the needed skills (Dyer 1983:127).

The process requirements of training and development should be satisfied via the following:

- Systematic training programs that are seen as useful and important in preparing one to progress.
- More effective coaching from a senior, continuous on-the-job-training.
- More effective performance reviews followed by a chance to get training and coaching.
- Introduce a training needs survey to determine if the current training satisfies the need (Dyer 1983:127)

A supervisor is responsible for those directly involved in output activities and will direct the work of people at the unskilled, semi-skilled and non college-educated people.

There is no question that the role of one that is handling unskilled workers is going to be different than management staff and will be appropriate to look at the job requirements of supervisors and plan programs of training and development, or placement consistent with the demands of the situation (Dyer 1983:138).

Supervisors carry the burden of directing the work of employees at the direct point of production. They are critical to the success of any organization and too often they are not given the training needed to deal with the demands of the job. To determine those needs via an assessment process seems to be vital in insuring that training is relevant to job realities and development.

If supervisory training is going to make any difference in performance on the job, the training program should be designed against those areas identified as needing improving in supervisory behaviour in the organization. Many supervisory training programs have been carried out without determining what training was really needed, this is where the needs assessment is required.

TRAINING OF SUPERVISORS

Skills transfer

The trainer passes on to her/his student knowledge and skills which are required to do the job, as well as information regarding trends in that specific area. The mentor may be required to intervene in the student's on-the-job training to ensure that such training is expedited optimally, often offering practical solutions in the learning process. Depending on the current level of the student (with reference to Table 1 above), it may be necessary to do the work physically to demonstrate the actual use of the tool, system and/or method for better understanding.

The trainer will transfer of wisdom and knowledge with regard to people management to the student. The trainer/student relationship may become a model for relationships developed by the student with his/her own support group. (Meyer *et al*, 2004:191).

Psychological support: when pressure mounts on the job, the role of the trainer is to assist the student in coping with stress and work related difficulties.

Confidence building: the trainer contributes to the confidence level of the student by demonstrating confidence in faith in him/her, cultivating a culture of trust which finally results in an improving environment.

Assistance with personal issues: the trainer offers counselling on, amongst other things, how to balance commitment to career against commitment to family, while exercising care not to invade the student's privacy. (Meyer *et al*, 2004:191).

Protection: the trainer provides a supportive environment around the student by intervening in situations that hinder the student's organizational advancement and growth.

Access to resources: the trainer utilises his/her position to make available to the student's resources and communication lines, not usually available (Meyer *et al*, 2004:191).

BENEFITS OF TRAINING TO THE ORGANIZATION

Integration to the individual

Training assists the individual to feel part of the organization and helps him/her to accept the required values and objectives of the organization (Meyer *et al*, 2004:192).

Decrease in personnel turnover

The trainer/student relationships prevent talented student from losing momentum, and because students receive regular positive feedback they are most inclined to remain within the organization and subsequently improving and growing (Meyer & Fourie, 2004:192).

Organizational communication

Trainer/students are in an ideal position to facilitate two-way communication within the organization (Meyer & Fourie, 2004:192).

Leadership and managerial development

The trainer passes on skills and knowledge to the student which might otherwise have been lost. Leadership and managerial development therefore takes place in a structured manner (Meyer & Fourie, 2004:192).

Productivity

The trainer enhance productivity by developing the skills of the student more quickly than might otherwise been the case (Meyer & Fourie, 2004:192).

Managerial succession

The mentor facilitates a smooth transference of managerial expertise from one generation to the next. The mentor also transfers the values and key components of the organization culture to the next generation (Meyer & Fourie, 2004:192).

DEVELOPMENT OF MENTORSHIP PROGRAMMES

Introduction

A formal mentoring programme is supported by senior management and a clear implementation plan will assist with the career- and skill development of selected employees. It should be based on growth and development, and not sponsorship.

Timeframes may be premeditated to the need and complexity (size and location) of the organization and care should be taken to encourage focus improvement, change acceleration and sustainability development (Meyer *et al*, 2004:115).

Ingredients of successful mentoring

- Thorough interview with the potential incumbent to identify the potential, ability and aims of the process (Meyer *et al*, 2004:204).
- Matching the incumbent (mentee) with a suitably qualified and matched mentor (Meyer *et al*, 2004:197).
- Effective training, with defined base-line criteria. (Meyer *et al*, 2004:196).
- Visible support throughout the entire term (Meyer *et al*, 2004:196).
- Regular evaluation, coordination, and continuous feedback supported by structured and strict reporting methods (Meyer *et al*, 2004:204).

Mentoring goals

Mentoring starts when a relationship is formed between a mentor and a mentee. Once the relationship has been established, the mentor and mentee would then set goals to be achieved during the relationship.

- The achievement of specific work goals such as the completion of a project to achieve a business target.
- Development of leadership, management, professional or life skills.
- The attainment of work-life balance.
- Finding solutions for complex business challenges or problems.
- The career development of the employee.
- Adapting to new situations or circumstances.
- Managing corporate change and transformation (Meyer *et al*, 2004:39).

Implementation process

Like all other organization development interventions and initiatives, mentoring should also be implemented by using a carefully planned and professional approach in terms of both the process and content.

- Create mentoring structures.
- Training mentoring coordinators.
- Identify mentors and mentees.
- Match mentors and mentees.
- Relationship goal-setting and plans.
- Implementation.
- Evaluation.
- Follow-up and improvement programme (Meyer & Mabaso, 2001:182) and (Meyer *et al*, 2004:184).

SUMMARY

Findings

The foundation of efficient management lies in the acceptance of a value system and the parties allied to the construction industry cannot allow neglecting those values as it is through the application thereof that excellence is achieved. It is also important to note that excellence is not only achieved through a set of rules, but also result from a team commitment using sound principles in achieving set goals. (Meyer *et al*, 2004:194).

Ongoing development in supervisor enhancement is crucial to the success of future projects and the improvement of manpower application. It is to the benefit of all if a project can be executed efficiently, within time, cost, quality and safely, without incidents. It will also enhance a heritage by benchmarking the application of values relevant to the industry.

Conclusion

Mentorship and training is a powerful tool to mould leaders and managers. For many mentees the net result is more than a change in skills and position. The dynamics of mentorship is a fundamental transformation of the manner in which mentees see themselves, their careers, their relationship with an organization and their potential as an individual (Meyer *et al*, 2004:194).

RECOMMENDATION

The challenge is to embrace mentoring and coaching as an empowerment tool that can be used to change negative circumstances in the current industry, with specific reference to the lives of the workforce and ultimately contribute to sustainability and growth. The individuality of the mentee needs to be recognized. The mentoring relationship and the overall mentoring process must be managed well to ensure an effective programme in the organization. The more we use technology to facilitate and

improve speed, quality and performance, the more we need the personal touch and human interaction. (Meyer *et al*, 2004:292).

The major determinants for the consideration of future development will consist of the following values:

- Trained and capable manpower resources in each category.
- People focussed environment.
- Excellence in all we do.
- Controlling for results.
- Strategic planning.

Quotations:

“Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit”. – Aristotle

“The great aim of education is not knowledge, but action” – Herbert Spencer
(Comprehensive Standard Dictionary. 1973. Special Edition. New York: Funk & Wagnalls.)

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