

# Quick Skills Series

## SKILLS FOR THE FIRST-TIME SUPERVISOR

*How to Manage People*



**Quick Skills Series**

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*How to Manage People*



Berwyn, PA (Philadelphia)

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# Quick Skills Series

## Skills for the First-Time Supervisor

By Career Solutions Publishing

### Executive Editor

Doris D. Humphrey

### Production Artist

Kathy Heming

### Technology Coordinator

David Burow

### Editor

Elaine Lynn

### Research Associate

Christopher Needles

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For more information, contact us at:

### Career Solutions Publishing

1189 Lancaster Avenue

Berwyn, PA 19312

Phone: (888) 299-2784

or find us on the Web at:

[www.careersolutionspublishing.com](http://www.careersolutionspublishing.com)

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from this book, contact us at:

[csp@careersolutionspublishing.com](mailto:csp@careersolutionspublishing.com)

Phone: (888) 299-2784

Fax: (610) 993-8292

## Educator Reviewers

### Rebecca Dedmond, PhD

*Director & Associate Professor  
Counseling and Human Development  
The George Washington University  
Alexandria, VA*

### Robert LaCarra, PhD

*Lead Faculty Administration of  
Justice and Pre-Law Advisor  
Gavilan College  
Gilroy, CA*

### Kevin Engellant, EdD

*Associate Professor of Business  
University of Montana Western  
Dillon, MT*

### Crystal R. McClure, MHS

*Work Ready Program Director  
Berks Community Action Program  
Reading, PA*



**Career Solutions  
Publishing**

1189 Lancaster Avenue | Berwyn, PA 19312 (Philadelphia)  
[csp@careersolutionspublishing.com](mailto:csp@careersolutionspublishing.com) | [www.careersolutionspublishing.com](http://www.careersolutionspublishing.com)  
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# Quick Skills Series

Expand your professional career skills by combining several *Quick Skills* books into your own customized learning plan.

## *Skills for the First-Time Supervisor*

New supervisors face similar challenges. While used to being responsible for their own efforts, they often feel nervous about being judged by the work of those under their supervision. This quick, preparatory course focuses on key concepts and abilities.

## *Customer Service*

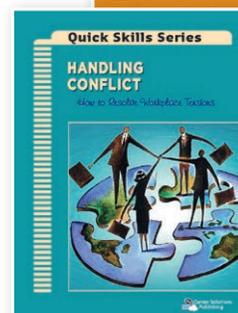
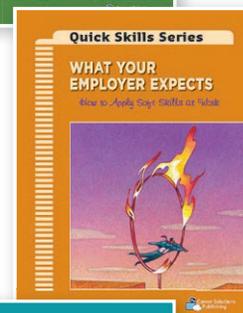
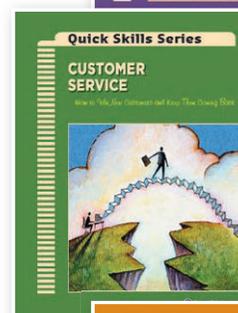
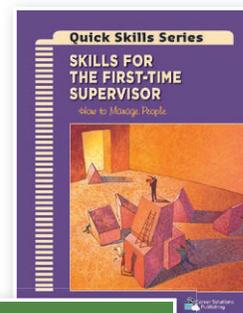
Putting the customer first is how you keep current customers and entice new ones to use your company's products or services. Giving customers what they want, increasing customer loyalty, and eliminating customer dissatisfaction is the focus of this book.

## *What Your Employer Expects*

Starting out strong is important for any newly-hired employee, and enhancing your skills, behaviors, and attitudes that employers want is the key to long-term success. You will learn strategies and receive recommendations and guidelines to assist in this process.

## *Handling Conflict*

Understanding why conflict arises and how to better manage it is a skill that can be learned; however, the process requires understanding oneself and others. With this book, you will cultivate the skills necessary for handling conflict in an effective and constructive manner.



Watch for these upcoming *Quick Skills Series* books

- Entrepreneurship Skills • Decision Making and Problem Solving
- Teamwork • Managing Change • Self-Management and Goal Setting
- Attitude and Self-Esteem • Advancing Your Career

# Employability Skills

Employability skills, sometimes called soft skills, have become the hard skills of today's workforce. They are the power skills that differentiate exceptional employees from only adequate employees. With powerful employability skills, you will rise faster and further in your career.

Important research conducted by Harvard University, the Carnegie Foundation and Stanford Research Center concluded that 85% of job success comes from having well-developed employability skills, and only 15% of job success comes from technical skills and knowledge, previously known as the hard skills. Employers worldwide say that many applicants do not possess acceptable employability skills and, therefore, are unprepared for work in a fast-changing, technological society.

Supervision of others is an employability skill that you may be expected to perform as you advance in your career. Whether leading a team of assembly workers, medical staff, salespeople, transport drivers, agricultural employees, culinary professionals, office support staff, or other group—new supervisors often face similar problems.

As a supervisor, you will be responsible for the work of subordinates. Your success will depend, to a great degree, on their success. You will be expected to maintain high productivity within the group while also managing individuals of different ages, skill levels, education, backgrounds, and ethnicities. In today's fast-paced, technology-oriented organizations, new supervisors need to be effective from day one. With *Skills for the First-Time Supervisor*, you will focus on key concepts and abilities that are basic to any supervisory position.

CONTACT US FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND PRICING:

**[csp@careersolutionspublishing.com](mailto:csp@careersolutionspublishing.com)**

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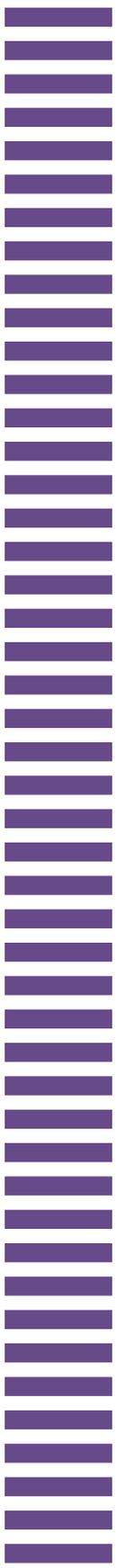
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# Skills for the First-Time Supervisor

**Y**ou're very good at the work you do. The managers of your organization recognize your ability, and in due time they promote you. Now you're a boss yourself, and you're supervising others—a great achievement!

If this familiar scenario applies to you, your knowledge of the job, plus the work skills you've already developed, will help you lead others to superior performance.

Soon you'll discover, however, that understanding how to do the work yourself is only a fraction of your job as a supervisor. There's so much else you need to know. For instance, how do you encourage others to be as committed to the work as you are? How do you instruct employees and correct their mistakes without making them resent you?

If you're in a typical U.S. firm, your task as a supervisor is made even more challenging by the diversity of the workforce. Individuals of Hispanic, African American, and Asian heritage make up more than 25 percent of the civilian labor force, and the percentage continues to increase. Women hold close to half of all jobs, and that proportion too is rising. Overall, the

American workforce is older and better educated than ever before, but there are large gaps between the high-skilled and the low-skilled.

What do these numbers mean? They suggest that, as a supervisor, you'll probably be responsible for leading people who are very different

from you, not only in their degree of training, but also in their schooling, their heritage, and their cultural outlook. In this

situation, you can't just "wing it." You need the skills of a supervisor.

This book will help you identify and develop those skills. To begin, try the self-assessment on the next page. For each statement, mark the response that best applies to you.



# Introduction

I will pay more for the ability to deal with people than for any other ability under the sun.

— **JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER**

*Business Leader*

What is your perception of the skills needed to be a successful supervisor? To find out, try the assessment that follows. For each statement, mark the response that best appeals to you.

	<b>Often</b>	<b>Sometimes</b>	<b>Never</b>
1. I like facing new challenges at work.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
2. I don't mind assuming responsibility.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
3. I adapt well to different situations.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
4. I manage my time efficiently.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
5. I'm good at organizing tasks and delegating them to other people.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
6. I can plan out a project successfully from beginning to end.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
7. I'm good at solving tough problems and making difficult decisions.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
8. I know how to get other people motivated.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
9. I'm a good, careful listener.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
10. I can critique people's work without offending them.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
11. I can handle rapid change without getting upset.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
12. I'm good at settling conflicts between others.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

If you checked “Sometimes” or “Never” for any of the above items, this book will help you improve in those areas. If you checked “Often” in every

instance, you may still find that you have more to learn. Even experienced supervisors need to keep learning in order to meet new challenges.

# Being A Supervisor

# Workshop

**M**ara is a carpenter with Walls Construction Company. She works on a team that does interior woodwork on custom-built homes. She's proud of her work, and her supervisor, Ryan, frequently praises her efforts.

One morning she gets a message to report to the firm's vice president, and this worries her. Did she do something wrong?

If there's a problem, why didn't she hear about it from Ryan?

She enters the office of Mr. Algozzine, who is standing behind his desk. "Yes, sir?" Mara says softly.

"You wanted to see me?"

Encouragingly, the vice president motions her to a chair. "I hear you do a nice job," he tells her. "I've looked at your work myself, and I like it. Your jobs are done on schedule, and the customers are happy. What I want to know is, could you turn out a whole house like that?"

"An entire house? Well, I've done all kinds of woodwork—cabinets, baseboards—and with enough time, I'm sure I—"



"I don't mean by yourself," Mr. Algozzine interrupts. "I mean as crew chief. We're transferring Ryan to another project, and he says you're the one to take over, even though you're the youngest on the crew."

Mara is amazed and pleased, but still very nervous. Herself a crew boss? Her head spins.

"Since you don't have supervisory experience, you'll have to learn fast," Mr. Algozzine goes on. "But we believe you can do it. You'll get a 15 percent raise, by the way."

Mara pulls herself together and expresses her thanks for the confidence the firm has shown in her. But as she leaves the vice president's office, she is thinking, "Wow! How am I going to handle this?"

## What's Inside

### *Here, you will learn to*

- ◆ appreciate the reasons for being a supervisor
- ◆ describe the functions of a supervisor
- ◆ improve your time management skills

## A Step Up

Like Mara, people who are good at their jobs often find themselves being promoted to supervisory positions. But even when you've been expecting it, the new position can seem daunting. Some of the employees under your leadership may be older and more experienced than you are. Moreover, you will now be judged not just by your own performance, but by the performance of all the people you are overseeing.

Given the complexities of a supervisory position, some people decide they don't want the promotion. They'd rather do more limited jobs, take the paycheck, and go home without extra worries. The first issue to address in this workshop, then, is why you should want to be a supervisor.



## Why Be a Supervisor?

There are some obvious advantages to being a supervisor:

- ◆ **Higher salary and better benefits.** By long-established practice, those who manage other people are paid more—often considerably more—than those who manage only tasks or machines. They may also receive superior benefit packages—better insurance, for example.

- ◆ **Increased status.** Supervisors have higher status in the company than base-level workers. They are treated with greater respect. Perhaps they have “perks”, such as extra vacation.
- ◆ **Power.** Supervisors have power over others—over their jobs they do, how they spend their time at work, and over whether they are promoted or fired.
- ◆ **Career advancement.** A supervisory position is typically the first step in a rise up the corporate ladder.

Most people enjoy increased status and power, and everyone likes a higher salary. If these are your only reasons for becoming a supervisor, however, you may be ill suited to the job. Good supervisors enjoy their positions for more subtle reasons, such as these:

- ◆ **The joy of meeting challenges.** Successful supervisors take pleasure in facing and solving new problems. They enjoy jobs that aren't routine.
- ◆ **The chance to help the organization meet its goals.** As a supervisor, you can have a major impact on your firm's success.
- ◆ **A greater sense of accomplishment in one's work.** As your job becomes more significant to the overall success of the firm, you feel a sense of pride and accomplishment. This feeling can raise your self-esteem and influence your entire attitude toward life.

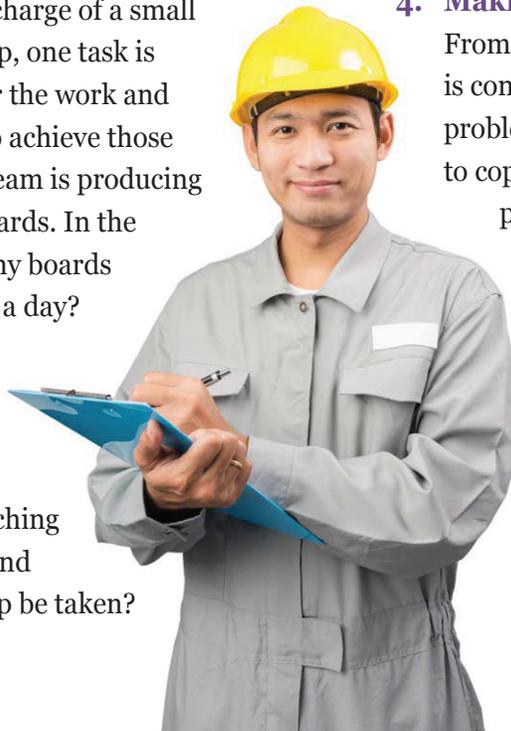
You've probably known one or two supervisors who didn't care much about meeting challenges and helping the organization reach its goals. They focused only on selfish benefits such as money and power. What did you think of them as supervisors?



# Functions of a Supervisor

Now that you've begun to think about why you might want to be a supervisor, it's time to consider the functions for which a supervisor is responsible. These can vary, of course, from company to company and from one supervisory position to another. Commonly, however, a supervisor's work includes the tasks described in the following list. For each task, note the typical questions that the supervisor has to answer.

- 1. Setting goals and planning.** Whether the supervisor is in charge of a small team or a large group, one task is to establish goals for the work and then devise a plan to achieve those objectives. Say the team is producing computer motherboards. In the short term, how many boards should it produce in a day? In the long term, what are the ways to improve output and quality? What are the steps for reaching these goals? When and how should each step be taken?



- 2. Organizing the work and assigning tasks.** Say there are ten tasks to be done. How will they be divided? How many people will be assigned to each? Which people? A supervisor makes these choices.
- 3. Controlling work performance.** After planning and organizing, the supervisor must set up a control process to ensure that the work actually gets done according to plan. What checks will ensure that a project stays on schedule? How will the final product be inspected for quality? How will costs be controlled?
- 4. Making decisions and solving problems.** From the planning stage forward, the supervisor is constantly making decisions and solving problems that arise. Often the supervisor has to cope with unexpected situations. Say the production line snags and one key employee is sick, but the schedule still has to be met—how can this difficulty be handled?

## ? Did you know?

For many years, educators have emphasized the role of teachers' expectations in student achievement. When teachers expect their students to succeed, the students often do. If teachers think their students are doomed to fail, however, the students often live up to those expectations.

The same kind of self-fulfilling prophecy has been found in the business world. Supervisors who set high goals and expect high performance from their subordinates generally get better results than those who expect little. The goals have to be realistic, of course, and the employees have to know that their efforts are appreciated.