

The Supervisor's Job Description

Summary: Supervision contributes significantly to employee effectiveness. An equitable and intentional approach ensures all team members have the same opportunities for success. Supervisors typically have a broader organizational perspective that provides context and motivation for staff. They also have access to relationships and resources staff often need to succeed.

Duties and responsibilities

Treat all staff in an equitable manner. Build a diverse workforce, model and practice inclusion; treat all staff equitably. Everyone should feel valued, supported, and heard.

Adapt to different staff needs. Bring awareness of your own preferences and shift approaches with intentionality.

Recruit and select new employees. Cast a wide net, including internal candidates when appropriate, and select from a diverse applicant pool. Don't race to the finish line; be sure you are selecting someone you are confident can succeed.

Orient and train new staff. In addition to the basics like benefits enrollment and using technology, discuss "softer" matters like meeting norms, decision making expectations, and organization and team culture. It is also important to clearly communicate your expectations – both around goals and the ways in which you expect staff to operate, communicate, and be in relationship with you and their colleagues.

Oversee administrative matters. Sign timesheets, approve time off, implement personnel policies.

Schedule, plan, and conduct one on one supervision. These meetings are a critical tool for building mutually respectful and trusting relationships. They also provide an opportunity to give and receive feedback, set expectations and plans, monitor work, and share information.

Communicate with intentionality. Set and share clear goals and expectations, provide consistent and effective feedback, share information.

Manage performance. Set and communicate clear, measurable goals and check in frequently. Provide appreciative feedback, feedback for learning, and directive feedback as needed. Acknowledge and celebrate accomplishments.

Provide training and development opportunities. Ensure staff have the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in their role. Consider and discuss career goals and provide opportunities for professional development as appropriate.

Serve as ambassador and advocate. Represent your direct reports and team across the organization. Ensure that team's work, interests and needs are well understood at other levels and parts of the organization and that their perspective and expertise is included in cross-organizational collaborations as appropriate. Ensure people have information and resources to be effective. Share organizational priorities, vision, strategies, and plans.

Adapted from <https://resources.workable.com/supervisor-job-description>

WORKSHEET #1: Adapting supervisory approach

1. The challenge I am facing is:

2. I have tried to address it by:

3. The results of my attempts to address this challenge are:

Supervisor situation: I am most comfortable using this style:

☐ Directing ☐ Cheerleading ☐ Coaching ☐ Delegating

4. The staff person involved in this challenge's situation or readiness is:

Innate inclination (1 – 5) _____

Experience (1 – 5) _____

Motivation (1 – 5) _____

Total _____ \div 3 = _____ (Readiness factor)

5. The style that would be the best match in this situation is:

☐ Directing ☐ Cheerleading ☐ Coaching ☐ Delegating

6. Specific things I will do differently to adapt my style to this situation are:

7. I will leverage this experience to shift our culture by:

One on one supervisor meetings

Regularly scheduled, one on one supervisions meetings may be the most valuable tools in a supervisor's toolbox. Supervisory meetings provide the time and space to build mutually respectful relationships. They are the appropriate place for soliciting and providing feedback; for planning career and professional development pathways. They are the platform for important conversations with new employees about organizational culture, job and workplace-related expectations, and the ways in which you will work together. While weekly or bi-weekly meetings with multiple direct reports may feel overly time consuming, consider the time required to address significant issues, and possibly refill positions, when those issues can't be remedied. An investment of time up front not only contributes to long-term employee success, it serves as a preventative measure, helping ensure that things go smoothly throughout the course of an employee's tenure with your team.

Keys to valuable supervision meetings

Schedule them regularly. Meet for at least for 30 minutes every other week. It will likely be important to meet more often and for longer periods of time with new employees. Consider scheduling a year of meetings at once so that time is held on your calendars.

Meet individually. Team meetings play an important role but they don't replace individual meetings. One on one meetings are a more appropriate place for many, perhaps even most, supervisory conversations.

Minimize distractions and be fully present. Demonstrate the value you place on this time and this person.

Connect personally and professionally. People are most effective when they can fully be themselves at work. Get to know the the people you supervise. Remember that relationship building is an important part of building trust.

Be prepared and follow up. Make good use of this time! Be prepared with an agenda. You might create it, the staff person might create it, or perhaps you create it together. Take good notes. They will help you track conversations from meeting to meeting. An added benefit: A year's worth of supervision notes make completing an annual review much less onerous.

A supervisor's agenda

These topics don't all need to be discussed at every meeting but should be touched upon regularly:

Check in. How are you? How is the work going?

Follow up from last time. What did you say you would do? What did they say they would do?

Problem solving. Identify and address barriers to success.

Planning. What is coming up that might impact the work? For the team? The organization?

Information sharing. What news or information do you have access to that would be helpful? What do they know that would be useful to you?

Relationships check in. How are partnerships, collaborations, and other collegial relations? Solicit feedback and offer about your relationship with one another.

Professional development. Are there areas of their current work in which they would benefit from training? What are their aspirations? How can you support their growth and development?

WORKSHEET #2: *Creating a culture of supervision, moving to action*

1. How might you customize the job description for a supervisor? What changes could you make to better reflect your organizational culture?

2. How could you use the supervisor job description to build an organization-wide culture of supervision?

3. How can you encourage your supervisors to more intentionally adapt their preferred approach to meet staff need?

4. What are three things you can do to ensure that supervisors and staff meet regularly and that those meetings are time well spent?
 - 1) _____

 - 2) _____

 - 3) _____

5. Are there any other actions you will take to strengthen the culture of supervision in your organization?

