# Job Savvy

# How to Be a Success at Work

Sixth Edition

# Chapter 8: Getting Along with Your Supervisor

## Video Transcript

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# Title Card

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# Chapter 8 Getting Along with Your Supervisor

Supervisors are the first-line leaders working with employees who produce goods or provide essential services directly to customers. They may have titles such as team leader, group leader, department head, manager, or chief. Getting along with your supervisor will make your work experience more pleasant because a supervisor makes decisions that affect your work and because supervisors frequently make recommendations about promotions, salary increases, and employee firings, which affect career advancement.

This chapter will help you learn to develop good communication and collaboration skills with your supervisor, identify methods to meet supervisor expectations, and evaluate your employee role and identify potential conflicts with your supervisor.

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# The Team Leader

Being a supervisor is not easy. A supervisor – often called a team leader – plans, schedules, orders work materials, directs the activities of employees, checks the productivity and quality of work, and coordinates all work activities with other areas of the organization.

A supervisor must delegate tasks to employees to ensure that all the work gets done. It is important to recognize that supervisors have responsibilities that other employees don’t have. Employees are often unaware of the unseen tasks supervisors must complete, but these tasks can be stressful.

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# The Team Leader (continued)

The leader-member exchange, or LMX, is an idea that focuses on the two-way relationship between leaders and followers. In this concept, leaders classify workers in two categories: out-group and in-group. Followers who insist on only doing the work required by their job descriptions become members of the **out-group**.

Followers of the in-group include workers who are willing to go above and beyond their job requirements. They work well with their leaders. Members of the in-group often receive preferred treatment, have more access to the leader, and receive richer feedback. They may be rewarded with more flexible schedules, better assignments, and more learning opportunities. Being a good follower is a good strategy for creating a pleasant work environment and being a success at work.

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# The Team Leader (continued)

Practicing these Ten Rules of Good Followership written by US Air Force Colonel Phillip Meilinger will help you to become a better follower and part of the in-group.

1. Don’t blame the boss.

2. Don’t fight the boss.

3. Use initiative.

4. Accept responsibility.

5. Tell the truth, and don’t quibble.

6. Do your homework.

7. Follow through – specifically: Be willing to implement suggestions you make.

8. Keep the boss informed.

9. Fix problems as they occur.

10. Put in an honest day’s work.

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# Communicate with Your Supervisor

Communicating well with your supervisor will create a good working relationship. Follow these tips:

Concentrate on the supervisor.

Listen to both the spoken words and the nonverbal communication.

Watch your supervisor when a process is demonstrated. If you don’t understand, ask that it be repeated.

After you have listened and observed, ask questions.

Record notes to document the important points to remember.

Practice. With your supervisor’s permission, perform the task.

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# Communicate with Your Supervisor (continued)

Every organization develops its own terminology called **jargon**. Jargon is specialized words or language used by a specific group of people. It can be in the form of words or acronyms.

For example, your supervisor might tell you that you will be “pulling” today. This could mean you’ll be taking packages off a conveyor belt to be loaded onto a truck or finding items from a warehouse to be packaged.

An acronym is an abbreviation. Your supervisor might say you can’t get a computer until you submit an RFP, which might refer to a “request for purchase.” When you hear a term that is unclear, ask for an explanation.

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# Communicate with Your Supervisor (continued)

Asking questions when you don’t understand something is a part of communicating well. It’s better to ask a question than to make a major mistake. Not asking questions can result in broken equipment, angry customers, and other mistakes.

Here are some simple guidelines for asking questions:

Ask Immediately.

Summarize the Response.

Memorize or Record the Answer.

What this means is that you should Ask a question as soon as it arises.

When the supervisor answers your question, repeat the answer in your own words. This lets you make sure that you clearly understand the answer.

Record answers in a notebook or smartphone if you have trouble memorizing information during training.

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# Communicate with Your Supervisor (continued)

Your supervisor needs to be kept informed of your work – both daily and ongoing assignments. Reporting to your supervisor shows that you can be trusted to complete assignments responsibly.

Contact your supervisor in the following situations:

1. When you complete a task – A busy supervisor will appreciate knowing when you’ve finished a task.

2. When you aren’t sure how to proceed – If you don’t know how to complete a task, ask your supervisor for guidance.

3. When you have a problem – When you aren’t sure how to solve a problem, contact your supervisor to keep the problem from getting worse.

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# Communicate with Your Supervisor (continued)

**Coaching** allows your supervisor to help you improve your job performance. Follow these guidelines to communicate with your supervisor about your job performance:

-Respond positively to feedback.

-Know what you’ve done wrong, and apologize if you made a mistake.

-Thank your supervisor, and learn to accept praise.

-Ask for feedback. If you aren’t sure what your supervisor thinks about the work you are doing, just ask!

-Remember to keep track of your successes and challenges. Be honest and evaluate yourself realistically because you will be able to use these notes when it comes time to receive a performance appraisal.

A **performance appraisal** is a formal report about your job performance based on your supervisor’s evaluation of your work. You are rated on various aspects of your job. If your manager doesn’t offer a review of your work, show initiative and request one. It is reasonable to have your supervisor review your work quarterly, semiannually, or annually, depending on your organization’s policy.

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# Meet Your Supervisor’s Expectations

Take action to become part of your leader’s in-group by practicing the following.

Be truthful – Your supervisor expects you to tell the truth at all times.

Don’t extend your breaks – Your supervisor expects you to work during your scheduled hours. When you don’t return from a break on time, it can cause problems.

Get your work done – Balance your work between completing a task quickly and producing the highest quality of work you can.

Be cooperative – Help when your supervisor asks.

Be adaptive – Be willing to change when needed.

Take the initiative – Find ways to help your supervisor.

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# Performance Reviews

Many organizations use a performance appraisal (also called a performance review) to periodically evaluate employee performance. This formal process is conducted by a supervisor and includes completing a written report about your performance.

Some organizations use a review process called “360-degree feedback.” This includes reviews from yourself, coworkers, and your supervisor.

Regardless of the review type your company uses, it’s important to regularly keep a record of accomplishments, communicate regularly with your supervisor about your performance, know what your coworkers think, listen to all feedback with an open mind, develop a plan for improvement, implement the plan, and then get more feedback. Remember to be realistic. poor performance review that you objectively consider unfair should motivate you to think about your future with the organization. If you regularly receive unfair reviews, you might want to consider looking for another job. Of course, be sure you have a new job lined up before you resign.

If you follow this process, you will improve your communication and success on the job.

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# Courageous Followership

**Courageous followership** refers to the need to question an order when it doesn’t seem right. Occasionally a supervisor has asked a worker to do something inappropriate. If this happens, you need to stop and think. If the requested act contradicts company policy or the law, you need to refuse. Perhaps you are asked to do something that violates your religious or moral beliefs. Once again, you may choose to refuse. It is important to report the supervisor to HR or their superior. Organizations usually have set procedures to help employees when a supervisor has put them in a compromising situation.

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# A Useful Skill: Emotional Intelligence (EI)

The skill of **emotional intelligence** (EI) is useful when you’re dealing with others. When you develop this skill, you have a clearer concept of how others will react to your actions.

**Be aware of the reactions of others.** Some individuals are oblivious of others’ emotions and opinions, and they act with total disregard for anyone else. Emotional intelligence requires listening and learning to recognize nonverbal clues when communicating with others.

**Understand why others react as they do.** An emotionally intelligent person is conscious of factors that may play a role in the responses of individuals. For example, scheduling a meeting to discuss your recent performance review on the day your supervisor just returned from vacation and has meetings all day might result in a negative reaction. A meeting on a less hectic day would be to your advantage.

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# Resolving Problems with Your Supervisor

**Conflict resolution** is a way to address workplace conflicts. To find a solution, explain your perception of the problem to your supervisor. Listen to their feedback. Explain what you want done. Allow the supervisor to explain what can be done. Compromise to solve the problem.

These simple suggestions can help you keep conflicts to a minimum:

-Own up to your mistakes.

-State your feelings, and always focus on using “I” statements when you feel uneasy about a situation or a way someone is talking to you.

-Ask for feedback. You may want to ask your supervisor whether you understand a situation correctly, or ask a coworker for clarification. You may also ask the other person if you have acted appropriately. This shows you are willing to be a team player and work on your communication skills if needed.

-State what you want clearly and respectfully.

-Compromise when appropriate. Sometimes not all needs can be met or all sides understood. In those situations, how can some of everyone’s needs be met? The ideal result of any conflict is that both parties are satisfied.

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# Resolving Problems with Your Supervisor

If a conflict cannot be resolved, you might decide to go through a **grievance procedure**. Organizations have procedures to follow. Employee rights are based on federal and state laws, personnel policies, and sometimes local contracts. If your employer violates one of these laws or policies, you may file a grievance.

Be aware that filing a grievance creates tension between employees and leadership. Filing a grievance sometimes involves an arbitrator who makes decisions about the grievance when it involves a union.

If the problem is serious and you do decide to file a grievance, discuss the problem with your supervisor to allow the two of you to reach an acceptable solution. If the supervisor doesn’t correct the problem, contact the personnel office or the organization’s owner. If the company doesn’t correct the problem, the government agency responsible for enforcing related laws may be able to help. Know your rights as employee throughout this process. A job coach, career counselor, or legal advisor may be helpful in these situations.

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# Resolving Problems with Your Supervisor (continued)

When a worker’s job performance or behavior is unacceptable, a supervisor will address the problem. If the problem isn’t corrected, **disciplinary action** may be taken. The disciplinary responses explained here are common to many organizations:

-Oral warning – A supervisor tells the worker that their performance or behavior is unacceptable. The oral warning goes into the worker’s personnel record but is removed later if no further problems arise.

-Written warning – A written warning might become a permanent part of a worker’s personnel record.

-Suspension – A Suspension is when the worker is not allowed to work or receive pay for a short period of time.

-Dismissal – A dismissal is when the organization will no longer tolerate a worker’s poor work performance or behavior and the worker is terminated.

-Immediate Response – Some organizations immediately escort a terminated worker out of the building.

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# Resolving Employee Rights Issues

It’s important to know your rights as an employee. Your rights are based on

these factors:

-Federal laws (see the Employment Law Guide).

-State (or local) laws.

-Personnel policies.

-Union contract personnel policies.

Understand that an organization or supervisor might not follow all laws and policies. Workers have the right to disagree with illegal behavior of a company. Remember, a disagreement with an employer caused by a violation of a law or policy is called a “grievance.”

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# Conclusion

Supervisors are people, too. Whether they are excellent or poor leaders, all supervisors appreciate good employees. Supervisors can’t do their jobs without them. If you practice the guidelines in this chapter, you will increase the chances of establishing a positive relationship with your supervisor.

If a problem does develop between you and your supervisor, try to resolve it. If a formal procedure is necessary, or your supervisor takes disciplinary action against you, make sure that you understand how your organization handles such situations. Always try to abide by your employer’s rules and guidelines.