

Job Relations - Session II

Importance of Getting the Facts

Review the 4 Step Method

1. Briefly make some opening comments welcoming everyone back to the session.
2. Let's take a look at our 4 step method of handling problems. What are the four steps a good supervisor follows when he takes action on a problem?

Draw out the answers from the group and write the four steps on the board

- Get the facts
- Weigh and decide
- Take action
- Check results

3. We are setting up a pattern here. We handle these situations in slow motion, in order to get a closer look at them. Actually on the job, even though this method is many times speeded up, you still go through the same steps.
4. This may seem to take time, but if it saves time in the long run isn't it surely worth it?

Note: 5 minutes to here

Develop ability in using the method by presenting and using the Tom problem

1. Focus attention on the importance of Step 1 – Get the Facts.

In the use of this method Step 1 is basic however the success of Steps 2, 3, and 4 depend upon getting the facts.

(Underline Step 1 Get the facts on the board)

In some problems all the facts are not obtained until personal opinions and feelings are considered. These personal opinions and feelings must be considered as facts. What a worker thinks, right or wrong, is a fact to him and must be considered as such.

I am now going to tell you about a problem in which a supervisor talked with a man and by getting his opinions and feelings obtained the important facts.

The purpose in relating this particular problem is to stress not only the importance of getting the facts, but also to give us an opportunity to see exactly how this supervisor talked with this man in order to get personal opinions and feelings.

This problem is one where what is said and how it is said is very important. I'm going to read this to you so we'll get just what was said by both of them.

2. Read the problem. Make it live. Do not read in a monotone voice

Setting: A supervisor is out in the shop and notices a workman is reaching into a machine.

Supervisor: Tom, I've told you to shut off that machine whenever you take off the guard (the supervisor is mad as he has warned Tom of this before)

Tom yells back: If you want to get rid of me why don't you just do it instead of getting on my case all the time!

Supervisor: Keep your shirt on. This is not about firing you Tom. I just don't want you getting injured at work and losing the use of your hand. The number of times you are reaching into that machine to adjust it also makes me think there is something wrong with it.

Tom: Well I'm not putting up with any more of your comments.

Note: The supervisor is clearly facing a problem and here is what went through his mind very quickly.

Supervisor thinking: Now, let's see. I've known Tom for a very long time. He's been one of the best men in the department. He says I've been on his case. He is reckless at times in his work. Yesterday I had to get on him as well about a quality problem. And it hasn't been so long since I had to get on him about not making the production rate for his job. What's happened to Tom? I guess I have been on his case a lot lately. But it was always something that had to be done. And I can't have him taking chances at work in regards to personal safety.

Note: Do you notice how this problem came up? There had been a change in Tom but the supervisor didn't get into the problem before. He waited and now it has erupted somewhat in his face.

Supervisor: Suppose we get together this afternoon and talk this over. I'll let you know when I can get someone over here to relieve you.

Note: Why do you think the supervisor didn't talk to him then? Do you think that it would have done any good to stay there right then and argue with him? He isn't going to talk in the department or while Tom is mad.

Later that afternoon Tom arrives at the supervisor's office.

Supervisor: Hello Tom. Sit down. Now Tom, I guess you think I've been hard on you lately. I don't want to do anything like that. A couple of times I've had to stop you because you were doing something dangerous. And there have been a couple of times lately when your work hasn't been quite up to par. I'm used to quality work from you.

Every time I see you taking a chance that might cause trouble I've got to stop you. When your work isn't up to standard, why then I've got to say something about that too.

Now is there something the matter with that machine? I know you're always taking off the guard and reaching into it. If there's something wrong with the machine, I want to get it fixed.

Note: What is the supervisor doing here? He is trying to do the obvious thing first – to see if the trouble is connected with the machine.

Tom: Well if you think I'm going to go to all the trouble of shutting down the machine and putting a "don't touch" sign on it you're crazy. You're complaining one day about how little I get done. Yet if I have to spend half my day shutting the machine on and off I would get even less done. And the other day you complained that my parts weren't up to standard. Well if I didn't fix the machine then they'd all be bad!

Note: Tom is not going to make this easy at all. The supervisor could have cut in and told him it wouldn't take half the day to shut the machine down properly but it would not have mattered. Tom is in the room so that the supervisor could talk to him and listen and try to learn what the problem was.

Supervisor: Now Tom, there's more to this than breaking a shop safety rule. There's a reason behind the safety rule. You could really damage your hand you know.

Tom: And that would cost the company money wouldn't it?

Note: The supervisor might think that Tom was sore at the company about money – or would that be jumping to a conclusion.

Supervisor: Oh sure, it would cost the company money. But have we made you think that is all we are interested in?

Tom: Well that is all that counts with some people.

Note: Tom is bitter about something.

Supervisor: It would cost us a good man too. And that is harder to replace than money.

Tom: Well not everyone feels that way.

Note: He seems to be thinking about the importance of money to some people. The supervisor has a clue here, will he follow it up? Tom has been pretty hard to talk to. What does the supervisor have to follow up on from here?

Do not make this an extended discussion. If the group does not make a point, say that Tom seems to be thinking about the importance of money to somebody.

Supervisor: Why are you so focused on the money angle? You're doing all right that way aren't you? Seems to me you told me last spring you were going to build on that piece of land of yours after you get married. When you have a wife she won't like it if you take chances at work and lose a hand.

Tom: No one cares if I lose a hand.

Supervisor: Your family and girl friend would care.

Tom: I don't have a girl friend any more.

Supervisor: I'm sorry Tom. I didn't realize that. I just wanted you to realize that an injury might mean something to somebody else and not just you.

Tom: Well it doesn't mean anything to me now. I have a half built house and a girl friend that left me for another man to marry him. I've got nothing to show for it and nobody cares what happens to me anymore. And I don't need to try to make any more money or save any more money either. It changes a lot of things.

Note: This takes some careful handling. The supervisor wants to get Tom back to normal production and safe work habits. He also wants to stay on good terms with Tom. Now the supervisor has a chance to make a speech – he could tell Tom he was lucky to be rid of her, or make some comment but he needs to listen to Tom and not do all the talking.

Supervisor: A blow like that is tough and it is no use saying it isn't. But sometimes you have to take it on the chin. Some things can be fixed up, though. I wish you'd see your way to helping me figure this out what's wrong with the way the line has been running.

I can see now why you have been a little more careless about taking chances. But I also knew that you wouldn't take those chances unless something else had been wrong. I understand now a little more about how you have been feeling. Is there anything wrong with the machine as well?

Note: There seem to be two things to look at in this case. One is the human and the other is the machine.

Tom: No it isn't the machine. The parts aren't coming through the same way they used to. There's a burr left on them and a little piece keeps falling off into the machine. After so many build up I have to reach in there and clean them out.

Note: On this point the Supervisor should of course look into why there are burrs on the part that were not there before. He promises Tom that he will look into the matter promptly.

3. Just what is Tom's supervisor trying to accomplish up to this point?

(Get up from the group and stand at the board. Listen to their answers.)

Write – "To make Tom a safe worker and get production back to normal" on the board.

4. What are the facts?

(Get the facts from the group and put them on the board. See that the points listed below are included in the discussion, but not necessarily in this order)

Facts

Was a good worker

Quality and quantity down

Broke safety rule

Careless

Warned before

Talked back

Lost his girl friend

Felt nobody cared

Burrs on parts

Discuss all these points. Make sure that you leave the group with the realization that the supervisor got three very important facts because he talked with the individual to get opinions and feelings.

5. Consider step 2 - weigh and decide

Ask the group to weigh and decide consider the facts above. Get possible actions from the group. Some may include the following:

Weigh and decide (discuss)

Warn him about safety rules

Give him a layoff

Investigate bad parts

Tell him losing girlfriend is tough luck
Other?

Discuss the pro's and con's of each of these – note we are not recommending the actions at this stage nor are they what the supervisor actually did.

Discuss the possible effect of each of these items on Tom, the team, production, etc.

6. Now let us see what did happen in this particular problem.

Read the following.

Supervisor: I can see why this would cause you trouble. I can't help you with the relationship situation and I am sorry about your tough luck. I would like to take a look at those bad parts however and see what I can do about them. I also want to thank you for sharing this information with me and helping out. I'll need your help further.

Note: Throughout the supervisor had listened sympathetically to Tom, he had encouraged and helped him to talk about the things that were important to him. Now that he had reached something specific – bad parts – he's going to check on that.

Later the supervisor also has a discussion with his own boss.

Supervisor: Jones, can I come up a minute? I want to talk to you about some bad parts we're getting from the punch press department. They're not coming through clean. I have a good operator on our line and it's interfering with work and slowing down our department.

7. What were the additional facts that Tom's supervisor got by talking with Tom and getting his opinions and feelings?

Discuss the question with the group. Write on the board "additional facts"

Additional facts

Lost his girlfriend
Felt nobody cared
Burrs on parts

What were the effect of this on Tom?

8. The supervisor looked at all the facts and he felt he had a complete story.

Based upon all the available information the supervisor felt he had a complete story. It helped him understand why Tom was acting the way that he was. What if the supervisor had taken action too early without investigating all the facts? What could have resulted?

9. What action did he take?

Summarize the action that the supervisor took with the group. Write “action” on the board and list the items.

Action

Told Tom that he was sorry

Asked for Tom’s help

Checked the bad parts

Reported bad parts to his own boss

What facts did this supervisor use in arriving at these actions?

Let’s look back at step 3.

Is the supervisor going to handle this himself? Yes it was his problem to address and he had some responsibility to take action.

Did he need help? Yes he needed Tom’s help to learn about the bad parts.

Did he refer anything to the supervisor? Yes he talked about the bad parts with his boss. But he didn’t say anything about Tom’s personal trouble.

Timing related? Note that Tom’s supervisor didn’t lose any time in acting.

10. Discuss step four – Check results

How soon do you think he’ll follow up on this? More than once?

What will he look for?

Do you think Tom’s supervisor accomplished his objective.

Did the supervisor use the four step method up to now?

11. Conclusion to the Tom problem.

You remember that the purpose of this problem was to stress not only the importance of getting the facts, but also to see how this supervisor handled this problem in order to get personal opinions and feelings. You can see what might have happened if this supervisor had not decided to get more facts before he took his action.

Do you think Tom’s supervisor was justified in getting him to talk about his personal affairs? This depends upon the individual, the problem, and the relationship they have. This supervisor knew the individual well enough to talk with Tom about such matters.

Has anyone here ever had a situation where a troubled personal relationship affected a member on one of your teams? Often people bring what happens outside of work into the plant with them just as Tom did. That's why the supervisor has to concern himself with personal feelings.

Did you notice that when Tom's supervisor called his boss that he didn't reveal the personal information he had about Tom? He could have said, "I have a jilted guy on my team down here," but he didn't. He said, "I have a good worker down here."

Note: 40 minutes to here

Remember we said that feelings and opinions are hard to get. We all can learn and develop this skill. Once this skill is acquired it becomes a useful tool for a supervisor.

Write on the board, "How to get feelings and opinions"

1. Just how did Tom's supervisor find out about Tom's opinions and feelings?

His supervisor could have argued with Tom about its taking him half his time to turn off the machine. Is anything ever satisfactorily settled by argument? Our first tip, then is don't argue.

Write on board, "Don't argue".

2. It took some encouragement to get Tom to talk about what seemed important to him, didn't it? The supervisor had to help him say what was wrong. The tip is to, "encourage him to talk about what is important to him."

Write on board, "Encourage him to talk about what is important to him"

3. If you are telling a story and someone interrupts you do you feel like continuing it? After Tom started talking did his boss interrupt him? Our tip is "Don't interrupt"

Write on board, "Don't interrupt"

4. Could the boss have spoiled everything by jumping to the conclusion that Tom was sore about money or something? Our tip is, "Don't jump to conclusions."

Write on board, "Don't jump to conclusions"

5. The supervisor had a chance to make a couple of speeches, didn't he? For example on safety, quality, and about the girl friend? You will notice that at some point he realized that he need to just listen and hear things from Tom. The tip is, "Don't do all the talking yourself."

Write on board, “Don’t do all the talking yourself”

6. Was Tom’s boss a good listener? How could he have done better? If you want to get opinions and feelings you have to listen, don’t you? Our tip is “Listen.”

Write on the board, “Listen”.

Summarize with the group the importance of using these tips. Clear board when discussion is complete.

Note: 45 minutes to here.

SUPERVISOR’S PROBLEMS & PRACTICE

In the next 1 hour and 10 minutes have two volunteers (identified yesterday) practice explaining a problem for 35 minutes each. Monitor time closely and spend the time equally. Refer to the standard procedure sheet at the end of this session during the problem practice.

Make sure after the problem is unveiled that you probe all the steps of Job Relations and practice them step by step in detail.

Write the key points under facts, weigh and decide, take action, and check results. Get feedback from the group on how it could have been handled from their point of view. Make sure no criticism is leveled at the person explaining the problem and reiterate the importance of keeping the name of the individual confidential.

Note: 1 hour and 55 minutes to here.

FINAL WRAP UP

Get three volunteers to bring problems to discuss for the next day. State that you will bring in another problem to discuss as well. Tell the class that it is also a good idea to bring in a problem they want to size up and try to take preventive action on (not just a problem from the past). The requirements for the problem overall are that it must be between the supervisor and the people he or she supervises, it must be a problem they can handle and not someone else’s job. They must also have the necessary information about the employee involved.

Thank the two people who participated by bringing in problems today for discussion. Make sure that everyone in the class is thinking of a problem they can bring in to discuss over the next couple of days. In order to receive a certification of completion each person must bring in a problem and participate.

Thank everyone and give any additional information for tomorrow.

Note: 2 hours to here.

Job Relations – Session II

Whiteboard guide – Tom Problem

Q: Just what is Tom's supervisor trying to accomplish?

A: To make Tom a safe worker and get production back to normal.

1. Get the facts
2. Weigh and decide
3. Take action
4. Check results

Facts

Was a good worker

Quality and quantity down

Broke safety rule

Careless

Warned before

Talked back

Lost his girl friend

Felt nobody cared

Burrs on parts

Weigh and decide (possible actions)

Warn about safety rules

Give penalty layoff

Report bad parts

Tell him losing girl friend isn't your fault

Take action

Told Tom he was sorry

Asked for Tom's help

Checked parts

Reported faulty parts

Standard procedure for discussing supervisor practice problem

Procedure	Key points
1. Ask supervisor to tell the problem	Make sure this involves someone under their direction. Have they taken action already? What action?
2. Confirm how the problem came up	Where appropriate stress if there was a sensed or anticipated change involved
3. Get the objective stated clearly	Get from the supervisor. What do they want to happen? Does the problem affect the whole group? What net result is desired after action is taken?
4. Step 1 Get the facts	Review the facts one by one and list them on the board. Use the JR card
5. Step 2 Weigh and decide	Fit the facts together. Look for gaps and contradictions. Discuss possible actions. What facts are used? Check options against current policies and rules. Check objective versus the action items with the group and supervisor. Discuss the probable effect on the individual, the rest of the team, other parties, production, etc.
6. Balance of case	Confirm the facts used in making a decision. Does it seem balanced?
7. Step 3 Take action	Why was this action taken? How was it taken? What was the timing?
8. Step 4 Check results	When was it checked? How was it checked? How often? What happened?
9. Check objective	Was the objective achieved by the supervisor?
10. Foundations comments	Discuss which steps mattered the most and how were they used.