

Job Relations – Session IV

Taking Preventive Action and Checking Results

Before the session starts write this on the board:

“Just what is the supervisor trying to accomplish?”

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

Today’s Focus: Practice on Steps 3 and 4.

1. Make appropriate opening comments to the group
2. By the use of the Tom problem in session 2 we discussed the importance of securing the facts through getting personal opinions and feelings. Using the old-timer problem in our last session we practiced on Step 2, “Weigh and Decide”.

In this session today we are going to hit hard on Steps 3 and 4, “Take Action” and “Check Results”.

Now I am going to present a problem which shows how a supervisor took action which was preventive, and how he checked the results on that action.

Note: This is the actual TWI/JR problem from the 1940’s and pertains to the introduction of female supervisor into the workforce. The topic is of course out dated and non-applicable by today’s standards.

3. Because of expansion, competition, scarcity of labor, and many other reasons, changes are taking place in organizations throughout the country.

There are many different types of changes occurring such as changes in shifts, changes in arrangements of labor policies, changes to work shop layout, and new equipment etc.

This section illustrates one kind of change in the workforce – the addition of female workers and supervisors to the production workforce.

4. Tell the opening of the problem of the female supervisor

The plant superintendent called Jim White the General Foreman into his office and told him that the management had decided to use women supervisors as well as men. The superintendent told Jim to fill supervisory vacancies with women on the basis of seniority and ability as was the rule with men.

He also told him that both men and women supervisors were to have the same authority and the same opportunity for advancement. Jim considered this very carefully and reviewed the following facts:

One supervisory position had to be filled, and no qualified men were available. All men capable of supervisory responsibility had been upgraded or had been taken into the armed forces. Most of the new employees who had come to the plant in the last 18 months were women.

Jim selected the best qualified woman for the job. As she was to be the first woman supervisor in the plant, Jim anticipated trouble. This was a major change. Some men supervisors might resent it. Also some men and women employees might not like having a woman in authority. More women supervisors would probably be appointed later.

This was the problem Jim faced. Should he do anything about it?

5. Discuss how this problem came up.
6. Obtain an objective using the standard procedure

Discuss with the group and write "To get female supervisor accepted" on the board.

7. Go through Step 1 – Get the facts

Get the facts from the audience. List on the board something similar to the following items.

Facts

No women supervisors before

Rule – seniority then ability

Same authority as men

One job open

No qualified men

Woman selected

Anticipated some trouble, supervisors and employees.

Review the subhead points in Step 1 on the JR cards

8. Go through Step 2 – Weigh and Decide

List possible actions on the board which the group suggests. They may include the following:

Weight and Decide (possible actions)

Mass meeting

Notice on bulletin board

Appoint her – say nothing

9. Check all possible actions against objective, and probable effect on individual, group, and production.

10. Tell balance of problem

Jim thought the situation over carefully. Then he talked individually with his supervisors and also he talked individually to those of the operators who were looked on as natural leaders. He gave them the facts and asked for their help.

There was quite a commotion. Some people said they wouldn't stand for it. Jim gave them a chance to do their talking and vent their steam. Eventually the workers subsided and agreed.

By the time the new supervisor took over her work the outburst was over and the people cooperated in accepting her. Before she went into her department Jim talked with her. He told her that she was going to be the first woman supervisor in the plant and that she might run into some difficulty and that she must not be easily offended. He asked her to do her best because it would not only affect her but also other women supervisors who would be appointed later.

During the first day on her new job, Jim talked with the supervisors and later in the day with the natural leaders he had talked with before. They informed him that apparently the new supervisor was accepted and everything was OK. Jim, to be sure that his preventive action was effective, kept in close touch with the situation for some time.

11. Get supervisors action from the group and list on the board

Action

Gave the facts in advance to supervisors and natural leaders

Asked their help

Let them vent

Asked cooperation and patience of new supervisor

What facts did Jim consider?

12. Discuss Step 3 – Take Action. Follow standard procedure and use the cards. Either get from the group or make the following points yourself.

Question: Jim handled this situation himself – why?

Answer: Jim felt it was his job as General Foreman, and he was best qualified to handle it.

Question: Did Jim get help? What advantage was it?

Answer: Jim got help from supervisors and natural leaders because they were in a position to help him get acceptance of the change.

Question: Should Jim have referred this to one of his supervisor?

Answer: No. His supervisor had referred it to him.

Question: In what way did Jim's timing contribute to the success of his action?

Answer: Jim allowed just the right time for them to vent steam and cool off before introducing the woman supervisor.

Question: How could Jim have handled this poorly?

Answer: He could have blamed management for the idea.

13. Discuss Step 4 – Check Results. Follow standard procedure and use the cards.

Question: How soon to check results? Why was it important for Jim to check immediately?

Answer: This change affected the whole plant.

Question: How often to check up on the situation and why?

Answer: Jim must check closely until he is certain the change is accepted.

Question: Did Jim check the effect on attitudes, relationships, and output? What did he look for?

Answer: Good attitude of fellow supervisors indicated acceptance of change. Good relationship with employees in her department proves her acceptance. (Note there was no production output reference information in the case).

Question: Did Jim achieve his objective? How did he know?

Answer: Yes he did. He used all four steps of JR.

14. What foundation points were used in this problem?

Emphasize foundation points 3 and 4.

“Tell people in advance about changes that affect them”.

“Make best use of everyone’s ability”

Note: 30 minutes to here.

Clear the board.

Discuss Effect of Change

Let’s take a look at the importance of preparing for the introduction of changes which affect individuals and groups.

Making that change in Jim’s department was something new. Individuals had personal feelings about how his change would affect them.

People generally get used to doing things in a particular place or in a certain way. We are all inclined to question whether it is necessary to change the things we have become accustomed to.

Do workers resist changes which affect their work place or tools or the people they will be working with or next to?

This, then, is a place where one of our foundations for good job relations comes in – tell people in advance about changes that will affect them.

Preparing the way for a change is surely an equally good thing to do when changes in payment plans, hours, locations of the department, new machinery, new products, or material are about to be introduced.

The first young person put in charge of old-timers or a woman on machines that have always been run by men are typical of problems supervisors can do something about in advance. Preparation of this sort prevents problems from arising later, saves time, and improves relationships.

But even though the way has been prepared for the change, it is still wise to check the results to find out how the individual or the members of the group accommodate themselves to the change.

Supervisors' Problem Practice

Practice handling 3 problems
Two problems of 30 minutes each
One problem of 25 minutes
Follow the standard procedure at the end of this session.
Clear the board when finished

Whiteboard Guide – Female Supervisor Case

Question: Just what is the supervisor trying to accomplish?

Answer: To get the woman supervisor accepted.

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

Facts

No women supervisors before
Rule – seniority then ability
Same authority and opportunity
One job open
No qualified men
Woman selected
Anticipated trouble – supervisors and employees

Weigh and decide

Mass meeting
Notice on bulletin board
Appoint her – say nothing

Action

Gave facts in advance to supervisors and natural leaders
Asked their help
Let them vent
Asked cooperation of new supervisor

Standard Procedure

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. |