

Supervision

Spontaneous conversations in the hallway and team meetings should never replace regularly scheduled individual supervision with each member of your staff. These meetings provide employees with a predictable time during which they will have your undivided attention. You and your staff can make best use of this time by both being prepared. Below are some key things to consider when meeting with your staff members individually.

Get to Know Each Other

When diving into a supervision meeting with a new employee, it is important to have an understanding of how you may work together, yet also have an understanding that this may change over time. We have employees from all experiences and backgrounds so no single employee is the same. You may need to adapt your style to accommodate your staff member and vice versa. This ensure compromise and a level of equity each time you meet and work closely together. You will need to build a culture of trust and transparency so the employee feels comfortable in these conversations as there is an obvious power dynamic. It is up to you to break these barriers. Some suggested items to discuss earlier are:

- **Get Personal** – here we don't mean share every detail of your lives, but share a bit about yourselves and your life journey to get an understanding about where each of you are coming from.
- **Work styles** – how would each of you describe the way you work? After talking, how can you work together to ensure that you are able to work smoothly together?
- **Communication styles** – is there a preferred method of communication for each of you? How do they show up in group meetings? Consider other styles so that you are creating an inclusive environment – an example is that some staff members feel comfortable speaking up in a group setting, others may need the push to be asked directly, and others may prefer to express their thoughts one-on-one.
- **Set Expectations** – how do you envision supervision to go? What are their aspirations? How can you give and receive feedback openly? Setting even the most detailed of expectations early can setup your relationship for success.
- **Understand Skills Level** – review the job description of the employee and go through the functions of the job and the qualifications. It is essential to get a good sense for where your employee is in terms of the skill level for the job so you will know where you and others will need to help them the most.

Internal Communications

As a supervisor, you may participate in various other meetings and groups. You also probably have a supervisor of your own. It is essential to practice active listening in these other settings and participate fully so that you are able to both relay information to your staff and advocate on behalf your staff. Be sure to take notes and walk away with some key points that you should be discussing with your staff in team meetings or in supervision. A question you should ask yourself is: "are there any key takeaways from other meetings I attended since we last spoke?" Transparency and openness is critical when trying to build a culture of trust and understanding.

On the other side of this, you may have discussions with your staff members and something may come up that is important feedback, something for further discussion, etc. Be sure that you are practicing active listening on this end and taking notes. You will also want to bring this with your supervisor or other group settings to be addressed or discussed. The key part of this is to then go back to your staff members and provide follow-ups and/or conclusions.

Scheduling Supervision

It is the supervisor's responsibility to put a regularly scheduled supervision session on each of their staff members' calendars. It is recommended to meet at least bi-weekly for one hour or more frequently, if necessary. Sometimes things come up and you or your staff member may need to cancel a meeting or cut a meeting short. This is something that should not happen often and there should be an effort to reschedule, even if it feels like there isn't much to catch up on this is also an opportunity for relationship building.

Performance Management

Supervision is the perfect time to discuss an employee's performance. Be sure to carve out some time to highlight some of the things your staff member did well since you last spoke. Shout them out for a job well-done. It would be good practice to have you both build a culture of sharing what each of you think the other has done well since you last spoke.

On the flip side, areas of improvement should also be discussed. You never want to ignore when something doesn't go well. Be sure to address this as quickly as possible, possibly even outside of supervision, and be sure that you have a shared understanding when walking away. Similar to positive feedback, it would be a positive experience to put aside some time in supervision to share some areas of improvement for each other to build that trust. When you are delivering critical feedback, be sure to not focus on anything with vague statements. Be sure you are providing concrete examples, followed by explaining how to improve moving forward. When discussing issues, it is also helpful to provide context around how their performance or behavior may be affecting others.

Always be sure you loop in Human Resources if you are continuously delivering the same feedback. If a Performance Improvement Plan or some sort of disciplinary action is required, HR is there to support you. Be sure to loop them in earlier rather than later.

Structuring Supervision

Setting expectations at the start of your supervision meetings can help keep the meeting on target so you can touch upon everything you previously planned. Be sure that both you and employee come to each supervision prepared with items to discuss. Some of the topics you should touch upon are:

- Are there action points from your last meeting to check in on?
- Are there any communications you need to pass down to your employee?
- Are there any communications you need to gather from your employee to bring up to other levels?
- Are there any training items related to their role you need to plan or any exercises you can do to build their capacity in their role?
- How are interpersonal relationships between this employee and others, such as peers, supervisees, and yourself?
- Are there professional development opportunities that need to be addressed?
- Are there performance issues that need to be discussed? Do they have any critical feedback for you?
- What went well since you last spoke? What do they think you did well?
- Recap! Walk away with a shared understanding. Sometimes, if necessary, you may want to send this via email.

Have Fun!

Supervision doesn't have to be serious *all of the time*. Have some fun with it! You want both you and your employee's time here to be enjoyable. Also, know that you are not in this alone. You can always talk to your supervisor or a member of Human Resources for guidance and support.