Building Supervisory Relationships

Chapter Outline

The supervisor who oversees the work of other staff members is a key link between organizational expectations and the provision of services. Most human service professionals find themselves playing at least limited supervisory roles throughout their careers. Some carry out supervision in the context of a managerial role, but many supervise the work of a limited number of direct-service staff.

The distinction between managerial and professional supervision may be less important to supervisory effectiveness than the quality of the relationships that the individual supervisor is able to create. A model for supervision should be broad enough to accommodate the subtle role differences within the supervisory relationship. Such an all-encompassing model must take into account issues related to the supervisee's motivation, the supervisor's relational style, the relevance of power and authority, and the special problems inherent in human service settings.

Supervisory Roles

Today's human service supervisor must fulfill several roles and functions to ensure efficient and effective services to clients. First and foremost, the supervisor, by virtue of the position, is an organizational leader. In this role, supervisors possess positional authority that allows them to facilitate supervisees' motivation and activity toward the accomplishment of organizational goals and objectives. This general purpose of supervision is accomplished through the supervisor's assumption of three corollary roles and functions: manager, mediator, and mentor. Together with and anchored by the leadership component, these dimensions bring to fruition a dynamic model of human services supervision.

As a manager, the human service supervisor must develop knowledge and skills in the areas of planning, budgeting, organizing, developing human resources, and evaluating programs. In today's world of organizational accountability, the administrative, or managerial, function of supervision has attained significant importance. The supervisor is responsible not only for his or her own performance but ultimately for the performance of his or her supervisees as well. In fact, supervisory performance is usually measured in terms of the performance of the supervisor's unit or team of supervisees. The supervisor is accountable to the organization and has an important role to play in ensuring positive outcomes for the agency's clients.

As a mediator, the human service supervisor is at the nexus between the two primary technologies found in the human service organization: the technologies of administration and direct practice. It is where the two technologies meet that service goals are operationalized into functional service objectives. It is the responsibility of the supervisor to mediate between and articulate the two technologies in a manner that satisfies the requirements of both in the efficient and effective delivery of services. As a mediator, the supervisor is the link between administration and direct services, between policy formulation and policy implementation. A critical function of the mediator role involves the facilitation of successful relationships within the supervisor's own group and between the group members and people in other units of the organization. When necessary, the supervisor may serve as a mediator between supervisees and the organization's environment, including clients and other service providers. This role requires considerable skills in decision making and conflict management as well as sensitivity to the needs of clients, staff, and the organization. It also leads at times to the supervisor feeling that he or she is "caught in the middle."

In addition to fulfilling the roles and executing the functions of leader, manager, and mediator, the human service supervisor also assumes the role and function of mentor to his or her supervisees. As leader, the supervisor is concerned with the morale, productivity, and job satisfaction of subordinates, including their integration into the agency and their identification with agency mission, goals, and objectives. As manager, the supervisor must deal with the day-to-day administrative tasks of planning, coordination, and evaluation. As mediator, the supervisor attends to the negotiation of relationships among staff members and between staff and other internal and external organizational units. As mentor, the supervisor's main responsibility is the professional growth and development of his or her supervisees.

It is in the mentor role that the supervisor has the best opportunity to provide individual emotional and psychological support to subordinates as well as to impart knowledge and help develop skills to enhance service delivery. This important role and function reflects the supervisor's commitment to professional values and ethics in service to clients and to the assurance that those values and ethics are reflected in the supervisees' practice. In this capacity, the supervisor differentially socializes the supervisees to such professional norms as fostering client self-determination, being nonjudgmental and objective, and protecting the confidentiality of case information. As mentor, the supervisor also helps workers develop self-awareness of their own feelings and responses to clients and the various issues that clients present.

The Supervisory Process

Across supervisory roles and settings, a supervisor's key tasks are likely to include the following:

- Providing encouragement and support for the supervisee
- Building motivation
- Increasing the mutuality of individual and organizational goals
- Enhancing the supervisee's competence in service delivery
- Carrying out ongoing assessments of the supervisee's success in fulfilling his or her responsibilities
- Providing prompt and objective feedback designed to enhance the supervisee's professional development

Of course, the nature of the supervisory relationship depends on the specific situation, especially on the supervisee's needs and developmental level. It is unrealistic to think that one supervisor could form the same kind of relationship with each of his or her supervisees. In fact, the relationship with each supervisee changes over time as the supervisee grows in competence and independence.

In the context of a collaborative interaction, the supervisor and supervisee should select both the objectives toward which the individual is expected to strive and the goals of the supervisory process itself. It is important to have clarity concerning both the supervisee's work objectives and the supervisor's role in providing support and assistance.

It is helpful to think of the supervisee's needs in terms of the Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2007) situational leadership model, which emphasizes the concept of readiness. Readiness encompasses the degree of willingness and ability the individual demonstrates. Willingness is "a combination of the varying degrees of confidence, commitment, and motivation" (Hersey et al., 2007, p. 476), whereas "ability is determined by the amount of knowledge, experience, and demonstrated skill the follower brings to the task" (p. 477). Both willingness and ability are clearly relevant to the supervisory process. The supervision needs of a "high-readiness" supervisee can be expected to differ significantly from those of an individual who needs active assistance either in the development of ability to perform or in the enhancement of willingness to learn.

In human service settings, the equivalent of the less "ready" worker is simply one who does not have a fully developed set of goals, methods, and motivations for carrying out specific tasks that relate to client needs or organizational mission. The major factor is not the supervisee's length of time on the job or years of training but rather his or her readiness to function independently. A specific supervisee may need additional task supervision to gain competence in a new area, or he or she may simply prefer a close working relationship with the supervisor. Whether the level of readiness is defined in terms of abilities or personal needs, the supervisor's goal should be to help the worker move steadily toward increased autonomy. A supportive supervisory relationship can form the basis for moving the individual from a stance of dependence to one of independence.

Throughout the supervision process, the supervisor and supervisee work together to specify objectives, clarify the criteria against which progress will be measured, and identify movement from one stage to the next. The supervisor must also specify his or her own contributions to the relationship, ensuring that the degree of personal support and task-oriented training needed will be offered. The supervisory contract involves recognizing both the supervisee's work objectives and the supervisor's contribution toward meeting them. As the worker becomes increasingly competent, the relationship may move away from a high task orientation to a more supportive interaction and, finally, to increased delegation and autonomy.

Skilled supervision is needed in the joint selection of goals in the attempt to find commonality between the supervisee's individual needs and the agency's or program's mission. When dealing with a professionally competent supervisee, the supervisor should place a high priority on seeking a set of goals and objectives that are acceptable to both parties of the supervisory dyad. These goals must be based on a recognition of changing client needs, with both supervisor and supervisee attempting to determine what amount and kinds of services the specific worker can reasonably be expected to provide. The degree to which additional training or support is needed should also be specified. Most important, the supervisor should accept that, once agreement about goals and objectives has been reached, the mature supervisee should be allowed to work in an autonomous fashion.

Yet autonomy does not mean isolation. Throughout the supervisory process, the relationship between supervisor and supervisee remains important. Although the need for active intervention may lessen, the supervisory dyad thrives in an atmosphere of trust and supportiveness. The supervisee in a human service setting is learning not just to perform tasks but to use the self as an instrument for helping others. That process implies a need for continual growth and nondefensiveness. In human service organizations, workers should be, and usually are, motivated by high needs for achievement and effectiveness. Their continued motivation—whether they are professionals, paraprofessionals, or volunteers—depends on the degree to which their jobs can be enriched and the degree of involvement they feel in the ongoing work of the program.

Clinical Supervision

When helping supervisees explore their interactions with clients, the supervisor is carrying out *clinical supervision*. This aspect of supervision is, of course, appropriate only in situations when the supervisor has appropriate clinical expertise along with supervisory skill. The American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work (2004, p. 3) specifies four separate domains of clinical supervision:

- *Clinical supervision of direct practice* refers to activities in which the supervisor guides and educates the clinical social worker supervisee in assessment, treatment/intervention, identification and resolution of ethical issues, and evaluation of client interventions.
- *Clinical supervision of treatment-team collaboration* refers to client-oriented activities in which the supervisor guides and educates the clinical social worker supervisee in interacting with other professionals in the service environment, influencing policies and procedures in the professional environment, and affecting political systems whose policies have an impact on client treatment/interventions.
- *Clinical supervision of continued learning* refers to activities in which the supervisor guides and educates the clinical social worker supervisee to develop the skills required for life-long continued professional learning.
- *Clinical supervision of job management* refers to activities in which the supervisor guides and educates the clinical social worker supervisee in work-related issues that frame the clinical work: record-keeping, fees, handling of phone calls and missed sessions, timeliness, report-writing, caseload management, and resolution of ethical issues.

This conceptualization makes it clear that although clinical supervision differs from administrative supervision, it still takes place in and must attend to the larger organizational environment.

The need to straddle the gap between the individual's professional practice and the exigencies of the environment is always a key component in supervision. The climate of the supervisor-supervisee relationship tends to change, however, when the focus turns to specific client needs rather than administrative concerns.

> The purpose of clinical supervisors is to help practitioners develop skills, overcome obstacles, increase competency, and practice ethically with clients. It is historically a teaching, training, mentoring, and monitoring position with an emphasis on developing and maintaining competence. The focus in clinical supervision is on the individual supervisee's activities with clients. The vehicle for supervision is the review of client cases and the offer of suggestions and corrective feedback for improvement. (Campbell, 2006, p. 5)

According to Falander and Shafranske (2004), clinical supervision, when effective, rests on three pillars: the relationship, the process of inquiry, and the educational praxis. The supervisory *relationship* allows for the development of an alliance that is at the heart of a successful supervisory experience. The process of *inquiry* enhances the supervisee's understanding of the therapeutic process and awareness of his or her professional responsibilities. *Educational praxis* "provides multiple learning strategies, including instruction, observation, and role playing, tailored to enhance the supervisee's knowledge and to develop his or her technical skills."

The Relationship in Clinical Supervision

A longstanding set of standards for counseling supervisors (Association for Counselor Education and Supervision, 1990) helps to clarify the competencies underlying successful clinical supervision, stating that the counseling supervisor:

1. Demonstrates knowledge of individual differences with respect to gender, race, ethnicity, culture and age and understands the importance of these characteristics in supervisory relationships;
2. Is sensitive to the counselor's personal and professional needs;
3. Expects counselors to own the consequences of their actions;
4. Is sensitive to the evaluative nature of supervision and effectively responds to the counselor's anxiety relative to performance evaluation;
5. Conducts self-evaluations, as appropriate, as a means of modeling professional growth;
6. Provides facilitative conditions (empathy, concreteness, respect, congruence, genuineness, and immediacy);
7. Establishes a mutually trusting relationship with the counselor;
8. Provides an appropriate balance of challenge and support; and
9. Elicits counselor thoughts and feelings during counseling or consultation sessions, and responds in a manner that enhances the supervision process (pp. 30–31).

This conceptualization of the work of the competent clinical supervisor's work clearly assumes that it is possible to have a supervisory relationship that is built on the same facilitative dimensions and helping skills that are implicit in successful work with clients. These standards also recognize, however, that the strong evaluative dimension of supervision has obvious effects on the mutuality of the relationship. Supervisors are always faced with the question of how they can build trusting relationships with supervisees even in the face of a clear power differential. Although anxieties about evaluation cannot always be overcome, it is helpful if the supervisor addresses this issue directly in the early stages of supervision and returns to it on a regular basis. In fact, Durham and Glosoff (2010) suggest that power issues, when addressed directly, can even be used as a means for helping supervisees consider their own interactions with clients.

> Use issues of power inherent in most supervisory relationships to help supervisees explore their own issues of power, oppression, and privilege. Empowering supervisees to voice their opinions and understand their own knowledge and expertise and building on their strengths are critical factors to modeling what we hope they do with their clients. (p. 145)

Effective clinical supervisors also find it helpful to keep the focus of the supervision on client well-being. Although supervisees are encouraged to carry out careful self-analysis, the ultimate purpose of this process is to make a difference in clients' lives.

Case Supervision

Reviewing the supervisee's current cases tends to be at the heart of most clinical supervision. Members of the helping professions often tend to think about supervision in terms of the processes they experienced in their training programs. In training programs, however, there are opportunities to go into depth on a very small number of cases, to view videos or listen to audio tapes, and to role play in a group setting. In the day-to-day world of a human service organization, however, using a variety of strategies may seem like a luxury. Supervisees often have very large client loads, making it difficult to focus for very long on just one case, and the use of video with actual clients is complex at best. Given these exigencies, supervisors and supervisees tend to focus on conceptualizing specific cases and making concrete plans for working with clients. It is possible, however, to enhance the supervisory process so that supervisees develop in positive directions and clients benefit. Consider the following pragmatic guidelines, which are realistic for a complex and fast-moving agency environment.

- ***Adhere to a regular schedule of supervisory meetings.*** In the face of competing demands, supervision might not always seem to be the best use of time for either the supervisor or the supervisee. The success of the supervisee and of the organization as a whole depends on good supervision, however, so these meetings should be seen as a high priority. When a schedule of supervisory meetings is not maintained, the supervisions tend to occur in response to client crises and the development of the supervisory relationship is sacrificed.

- ***Focus on a range of clients and clinical issues.*** The combination of time constraints and large case loads tends to lead toward supervisory meetings that are focused only on the most difficult issues and problematic clients. Ideally, supervision should attend to the development of the supervisee's competence, rather than a concentrating on a few examples of less competent practice. Placing the focus on a wider range of clients and issues makes it possible to start a meeting with a discussion of recent successes, as Campbell (2006) suggests, rather than keeping all of the emphasis on problems.
- ***Gather evaluative information in a broader context, rather than depending solely on the case consultation.*** Campbell (2006) suggests that the supervisor try to obtain additional information about the supervisee's work with clients rather than depending solely on the case consultation. One of the points that Campbell makes is that the clinical supervisor might face liability issues if it can be demonstrated that monitoring and evaluation were based on limited or biased data. In any human service organization, people in supervisory positions have access to clients' records and can often identify problems that have not arisen in the narrow context of the case consultation.
- ***Provide case supervision that attends to client advocacy as well as direct services.*** Members of the helping professions are expected to be competent advocates as well as direct service providers (Schneider & Lester, 2001; Ratts, Toporek, & Lewis, 2010). Despite this fact, clinical supervision in many settings tends to address the activities that go on within supervisees' offices at the expense of activities that involve helping clients indirectly by affecting their environments. Supervisors should, in fact, keep tabs on their supervisees' advocacy-related actions and work to enhance the competence levels of their staff members. Even when working on a direct-service case, supervisors should make sure that the environmental factors affecting the client are discussed. In reviewing a case, the supervisor can often enhance a supervisee's critical consciousness by raising questions about the degree to which a client's concerns are affected by social, political, economic, and cultural factors and about the possibilities for bringing about change through advocacy on behalf of the client.

Clinical Supervision from a Multicultural Perspective

It would be difficult for a supervisor to help practitioners work effectively with clients and systems without a high degree of multicultural competence. Multicultural competence always involves self-interrogation as well as knowledge and awareness about the cultural factors affecting others, and this is no less true for the supervisory relationship.

> Supervisors need to assess racial and cultural identity attitudes of both themselves and their supervisees. Of critical importance is identifying from the outset of the supervisory relationship the areas of convergence and divergence supervisors share with their supervisees regarding racial and cultural issues. Supervisors need to be aware of and acknowledge their areas of tensions or bias and prepare how to negotiate with each supervisee the unique resolutions of these tensions or biases. (Miville, Rosa, & Constantine, 2005, p. 197)

Just as helping professionals must bring to the surface the cultural factors affecting their relationships with clients, so must supervisors make sure that they are fully conscious of cultural issues affecting the supervisory dyad.

Multicultural competence includes, of course, knowledge as well as awareness. Supervisors have a responsibility to make sure that they, themselves, are knowledgeable about multiculturalism, especially in regard to the communities their agencies serve. Beyond this, they are also responsible for assessing and enhancing their supervisees' knowledge in this important arena.

> Anxiety in multicultural supervision may stem not only from biases but also from lack of knowledge about and experience in working with culturally different people. Targeting the racial-cultural knowledge base for dealing with the specific client load of the supervisee (or of the agency in which the supervision takes place) is an excellent place to begin. (Miville et al., 2005, p. 198)

Supervision takes place within an environmental context, so it is important for supervisors to be multiculturally competent not just in the one-to-one supervisory relationship but also in the daily life of the organization.

Activities beyond the supervision dyad increase the supportive context in which multicultural supervision occurs. Being involved as a multicultural or social justice leader ... provides a clear message to supervisees about the importance of being multiculturally competent. (Miville et al., 2005, p. 198)

7.1 Supervisory Issues at Grandview Community Center

Many of the things we learned about Grandview Community Center (GCC) in earlier chapters have implications for supervisory processes.

- We know that the communities and clients the center serves have changed over the years, with GCC now serving a much more diverse clientele than was true in its earlier years. This fact highlights the urgency of having multiculturally competent supervisors who are able to enhance their supervisees' effectiveness in working with clients and community members.
- We know that Executive Director Estrella decided to embark on a strategic planning project in part because she found that many members of the center's staff were focused on their own particular areas and did not have a strong sense of the mission and goals of the organization. Of course, one of the purposes of supervision is to encourage supervisees to view their own work in the context of the agency's overall mission. Supervision that connects individual and organizational goals can provide continual support for the sense of unity that the executive director is seeking.
- We learned from the center's organizational chart that (a) the organization does not have many administrative levels in which supervision would be carried out; (b) the center's work is divided by functional programs; and (c) the organization is also divided geographically. With the supervision role carried out primarily by the executive director and the program coordinators, conscious effort is required to maintain effective and regular supervision in the separate programs and communities. Good supervision tends to provide a means for implementing the organization's mission and, at the same time, helping service providers to meet needs that might differ between one neighborhood and another.

Theories of Motivation

Supervision requires an understanding of the complex needs that affect individual performance. These needs have been categorized and explained in a number of ways. At the broadest level, motivation theories are grouped as content theories, which have specific motivating factors, and process theories, which are content-free and describe the ways in which needs, behaviors, and rewards may interact. We will first review the three most common content theories of motivation, followed by a discussion of the most popular process theory: expectancy theory.

Content Theories

The mid-twentieth century brought to light a number of content theories that are still widely used. These theories include Maslow's hierarchy of needs, Herzberg's Motivation/Hygiene Theory, and McClelland's Needs Theory.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of needs is familiar to human service professionals in the context of personality theory. This concept is also important in the study of motivation in the workplace.

According to Maslow, human needs can be identified in terms of a hierarchy, with higher needs coming to the fore after lower needs have been met. The hierarchy of needs includes, from lowest to highest, (1) physiological needs, at the level of basic survival; (2) needs for safety and security; (3) needs for belonging, love, and social interaction; (4) esteem and status needs; and (5) self-actualization needs. Maslow's notion is that the lower needs dominate until they have been reasonably satisfied. When the lower needs have been met, the human being becomes increasingly motivated to satisfy higher needs. Finally, the search for self-actualization, or the realization of individual potential, can begin.

This idea has strong implications for work-related motivation because leadership must involve the identification of those needs that will form the basis for employee performance. Traditionally, attempts to motivate workers were oriented toward the use of economic rewards and the giving or withholding of job security. This process recognized only the lower-order needs.

Maslow's theory makes it clear that once these lower-order needs have been met, they no longer serve as motivators. When economic needs have been met and when some degree of security has been achieved, workers will tend to seek ways to meet higher-level needs through their work. When that point has been reached, the supervisee can best be motivated if some method is used to help him or her strive toward self-actualization. The worker at this level can be motivated only if the job itself allows for some degree of creativity, autonomy, and growth toward increased competence. It should also be remembered that if an agency is going through funding cuts or if there are real threats to security such as possibilities of client violence, higher-order needs will be replaced in prominence by lower-level ones until concerns related to basic needs are resolved.

Herzberg's Motivator/Hygiene Theory

The notion of differing sets of motivating needs is enhanced in the work of Herzberg (1975), who makes a clear distinction between the factors related to job dissatisfaction and those involved in producing job satisfaction and motivation. The factors that relate to job dissatisfaction, what Herzberg calls maintenance factors, involve such aspects of the work environment as the fairness of company policies, the quality of supervision, relationships with supervisors and coworkers, salary, job security, and working conditions. These are not motivating factors; their presence or absence determines whether the worker will be dissatisfied with the work setting. The motivator factors relate to the job itself and involve the ability of the specific job to offer the worker opportunities to accomplish something significant, receive recognition for accomplishments, grow and develop, gain increased responsibility, and advance.

According to Herzberg, the maintenance factors simply trigger the worker's pain avoidance behavior, and the motivator factors relate to the need for growth and advancement. These growth factors are intrinsic to the nature of the job and relate to job satisfaction. Attention to hygiene factors is insufficient to motivate workers. The only way supervisees can be effectively motivated is through attention to the degree to which their work provides chances for growth, development, and increased responsibility. Herzberg's notion is to use the concept of job enrichment, building into each job the maximum opportunity for challenge and advancement (see the discussion of job design in Chapter 6).

Mcclelland's Needs Theory

McClelland (1965) suggests that three distinct motivators can impel individuals in the work setting: the need for achievement, the need for power, and the need for affiliation. Although workers may possess all these needs to some degree, each individual is most strongly motivated by one. Thus, the achievement-motivated person values personal success and views it in terms of his or her ability to achieve measurable accomplishments. The individual who is motivated by achievement needs sets individual goals that are ambitious but clearly attainable and seeks frequent feedback concerning his or her competence and success. The person motivated by affiliation needs is most concerned with interpersonal relationships and is most effective in a setting offering supportiveness and opportunities for positive interactions. The power-motivated worker, being primarily concerned with influencing others, is most highly motivated in a setting giving him or her the opportunity to meet this need.

McClelland also makes an important distinction between two types of power. Personalized power involves the worker acting to enhance her or his own power and influence without regard to larger organizational goals, and it is generally seen as dysfunctional. Socialized power is manifested through an attempt to influence others for the good of the organization as a whole; it is seen as a legitimate and valuable motivator.

This approach to motivation has several implications for supervision. First, it makes clear that people with differing motivational sets have contrasting supervision needs. The affiliation-motivated worker is likely to respond to a relationship-oriented style, but an achievement-motivated person can be most effective when he or she has been delegated tasks that allow for individual performance. A power-oriented worker can be put in a position of leadership such as chairing a task force, in which this person will have opportunities to influence others to accomplish desired tasks.

A second implication for supervision is that achievement motivation, which may be closely related to high performance on the job, can be developed. In many work settings, training modalities and job redesign have been used to increase individuals' achievement motivation, and this approach might work in human service settings. In fields such as counseling and social work, an emphasis has historically been placed on affiliation—building relationships—with less attention to achievement. In counseling, for example, the client is seen as responsible for achieving change and the worker acting as a catalyst. Power dynamics in the past were typically seen as distasteful, with some exceptions in family therapy and radical therapy approaches articulated beginning in the 1970s. McClelland's model offers an opportunity for workers and supervisors to give greater attention to achievement of results, ranging from more adaptive behavior by a person with a mental illness to a welfare recipient getting a job. This model can also validate the appropriate use of power or influence to help create change.

Process Theories: Expectancy Theory

Expectancy theory is a general model of motivation developed by Vroom (1964). Bowditch, Buono, and Stewart (2008) have summarized its key elements:

> (1) an effort-performance expectation that increased effort will lead to good performance (expectancy); (2) a performance-outcome perception that good performance will lead to certain outcomes or rewards (instrumentality); and (3) the value or attractiveness of a given reward or outcome to an individual (valence). (p. 82)

An employee's effort is affected by the perceived value of the reward, the likelihood that effort will lead to the reward, and organizational factors such as the job context. Effort does not automatically lead to performance, however. It is moderated by the employee's abilities and traits and her or his role perceptions: work may not be performed if the employee feels an activity "is not my job." Performance may result in intrinsic rewards such as a feeling of accomplishment and extrinsic rewards such as praise or perhaps an extra day off (lack of performance may ultimately lead to no rewards, such as being fired).

The implications for supervisors are several. First, the supervisor should understand the employee's perceptions and abilities: what rewards are valued, what the employee's role conception is and views regarding equity, and whether effort does lead to rewards. The manager can then intervene by showing how effort leads to results and that results will in fact be rewarded in ways the employee appreciates. The employee's role can be clarified, and additional training can be provided to enhance abilities if needed. As a process theory, this model allows for vast individual differences in terms of motivating factors: particular content (rewards) can be applied based on individual employee needs and values.

Applying Theories of Motivation

We will now review some supervision techniques that can be used to apply motivation theories toward worker performance. These include management by objectives, organizational behavior modification, reward systems, and the use of power and influence.

Management by Objectives as a Motivator

Although Management by Objectives (MBO) may be thought of primarily as a planning and a performance appraisal tool, it also has strong implications for individual motivation. When an organization uses MBO, overall goals are developed through the agency's planning process. Objectives are then set so that each department or work unit has a set of objectives designed to work toward the general goals of the organization. Individuals participate with their immediate supervisors in setting objectives for their own participation in the overall design. These objectives then form the basis on which their performance is evaluated.

The use of MBO has been questioned, but it can improve productivity; in fact, the way in which it is implemented, rather than the technique itself, is the usual source of problems (Bowditch, Buono, & Stewart, 2008). Several principles should be applied to maximize the effectiveness of the process. First, objectives should be developed mutually by the worker and supervisor, not imposed from above. If a worker feels pressured to set particular objectives, she or he is likely to comply only as much as possible to avoid negative consequences. Also, according to Bowditch, Buono, and Stewart (2008):

> If it is to be successful, MBO should be characterized by (1) an active give-and-take between managers [or supervisors] and their subordinates; (2) a high level of face-to-face communication; (3) top management support and involvement; (4) flexibility in setting goals; (5) attention to implementation details (e.g., communication of its importance; MBO-related training; sufficient time frame; monitoring); (6) a high degree of fit with the specific needs of the organization; and (7) an organizational culture and climate that supports openness and sharing. (p. 86)

The agreement that forms the basis of MBO can be broadened to involve a mutual understanding of the kinds of outcome rewards that might be attached to successful meeting of objectives, as well as the degree of support needed to "clear the path" to success.

Organizational Behavior Modification

Many in the human services have viewed behavior modification with skepticism or aversion. In fact, however, even a person-centered therapist nodding earnestly and saying, "Tell me more," is using behavior modification. As is the case of many techniques, behavior modification is not inherently bad or good, effective or ineffective. Organizational behavior modification (OBM) is, of course, not universally necessary, but it can be a useful element of some supervisory relationships. Even if the organization does not comprehensively apply the model, OBM principles may be useful to a supervisor and worker as they discuss, for example, how the worker can best be rewarded.

Luthans and Kreitner (1975) suggest that OBM can provide a system through which positive reinforcement, or reward, is made contingent on improvements in work-related performance. The supervisor and supervisee would work together to define specific target behaviors. The individual's interests, concerns, and abilities would be taken into account as reinforcers for specific behaviors that were selected. As the individual's work effectiveness improved, he or she would receive positive reinforcers. The supervisor would also try to make the work environment favorable for skill development. Ideally, as the supervisee became more effective and confident, he or she would have complete control over the reinforcement schedule, with little outside help needed. The behavior modification approach might be used more directly with new or inexperienced workers or with those grappling with a specific difficulty. Experienced professionals can more easily monitor and reward their own behavior.

Once again, Bowditch, Buono, and Stewart (2008) offer useful guidance. They suggest that in successful OBM programs, managers "(1) reward people with what they value; (2) explicitly link the reward with the desired behavior; (3) appropriately fit the magnitude of the reward with the magnitude of the behavior; (4) reward better performers more than average performers; and (5) give meaningful feedback and the reward after the performance" (p. 89).

Reward Systems

Rewards are a key element of all models of motivation. We will review here examples of the types of rewards available to supervisors. The broadest categories of rewards are intrinsic and extrinsic. Extrinsic rewards include direct compensation (basic salary, overtime and holiday premiums, and performance bonuses), indirect compensation (health, pension, and other benefits), and nonfinancial compensation (desirable work assignments and office furnishings such as a computer). Intrinsic rewards are those at the higher levels of Maslow's hierarchy and are almost unlimited, including opportunities for participation in decision making or personal growth, interesting work, autonomy, and a feeling of accomplishment.

Because supervisors often have no control over some rewards, such as pay levels or intrinsic feelings of satisfaction felt by the employee, they must work with the subordinate to discuss what available rewards are desirable and how and under what conditions they may be given. For example, the supervisor may be able to recommend that the employee be moved up a step in pay grade or receive a bonus for exceptional work on a special project. The supervisor may also have some control over assignment of office space or equipment such as computers and accessories. The supervisor can usually provide rewards in the form of interesting work assignments or training opportunities, and, of course, recognition in the form of praise and symbolic rewards such as token gifts is possible. If an agency has employee- or team-of-the-month awards, a supervisor can nominate staff. Supervisors should remain up-to-date on what an employee would feel rewarded by and be alert for opportunities to reward whenever appropriate.

Some rewards such as praise may be given independent of agency systems; many rewards should be an explicit part of the agency's personnel policies. This would include pay scales, criteria and standards for advancement, the use of merit pay or bonuses, and perhaps employee-of-the-month awards. Any effective reward system should meet these requirements (Orsburn, 1994):

1. They must be visible and understandable to the people.
2. They must be perceived as being consistent and fair.
3. They must be aimed at the appropriate target (individual or team).
4. They must dispense a valued reinforcer (money, praise, status, etc.).

Recent developments in formal reward systems, including merit pay (Gabris, 1998) and team-based rewards (Orsburn, Moran, Musselwhite, & Zenger, 1990), may be options for some organizations. Administrators designing such systems will need to consult specialized sources (see, for example, Siegel, 1998) for guidance to ensure that any system chosen is appropriate and well designed. Even within limited or traditional agency systems, an individual supervisor can use dialogue and creativity with a subordinate to develop meaningful and useful rewards.

Power and Influence

Helping professionals sometimes view power (the ability to control others), influence (the ability to persuade others), authority (formalized power or influence), and their uses with distaste or ambivalence, but it must be admitted that human service workers do use power and influence in their work, in enforcing requirements of clients or trying to persuade coworkers (Gummer, 1990). It therefore behooves human service workers to be comfortable with the appropriate use of power and influence and to use power tactics to enhance organizational performance.

The use of power in the supervisory relationship is an example. Fortunately, if a subordinate wants to succeed in a job or profession, the supervisor does have the power to influence behavior. In fact, some supervisors are more influential than others, depending on the kind and amount of power they hold in the organizational context. The interactions among power, authority, and leadership are complex, and they can have significant effects on the supervisory process.

An individual's power to direct or influence others comes from a variety of sources. Most observers of power relationships still find useful the categories French and Raven (1959) suggested: coercive power; legitimate, or positional, power; expert power; reward power; and referent power. Hersey, Blanchard, and Johnson (2007) add to this list information power and connection power. In a supervisory situation, the use of coercive power is based on the supervisor's ability to control punishments, such as poor job assignments, low compensation, or disciplinary action. Legitimate, or positional, power involves acceptance of the supervisor's right to influence the supervisee's work by virtue of his or her official position in a hierarchical organization. Expert power depends on the supervisees respect for the expertise and knowledge that the specific supervisor brings to the work setting. Reward power finds its source in the supervisor's ability to provide positive rewards as incentives for defined behaviors. Referent power depends not on the external trappings of power but on the personal relationship between supervisor and supervisee and on the degree to which the supervisee respects and identifies with the supervisor. Information power draws on the supervisor's access to valuable information: a supervisor who has "inside information" or knowledge of upcoming developments before others may be more highly valued by staff. Connection power becomes a reality when the supervisor is perceived as having close contact with other influential people.

The supervisee must perceive a supervisor's power as real if the relationship itself is to prove influential. Some supervisees will respond to position power alone, however, and others will respond only to other types of power such as expertise. Supervisors do want to influence supervisees' behavior, attitudes, and effectiveness, and the supervisory relationship is the vehicle through which this process takes place. The form of the relationship must take into account the source of supervisory power. If supervisees are inexperienced, insecure, or at the beginning of the training process, they might at first respond to supervisors who clearly control the rewards and punishments that the system has to offer. More experienced and professional human service workers tend to gain only from supervisory relationships based on their respect for the expertise of a supervisor who is willing to maintain an egalitarian affiliation. Ideally, the supervisory relationship can develop and change over time, as the supervisee is actively encouraged to take increasing control over his or her learning.

In human service settings, issues of power are often especially difficult because supervisors tend to be wary of over-controlling others' efforts. Professionals want to be mentors but might feel uncomfortable about evaluating and influencing other workers' progress toward effectiveness. The supervisory relationship must recognize the existence of power while taking into account the unique aspects of the human service environment.

Participative Decision Making as a Supervision Approach

Because human service workers are often motivated by idealistic needs, they tend to work most effectively toward goals in which they feel a sense of ownership. Given that their work entails personal involvement as well as task completion, they must be committed to what they are doing. The human services, almost by definition, do not lend themselves to mechanistic task performance.

The nature of human service organizations also lends itself to collegial and democratic approaches to management. The goals toward which human service organizations work are often complex and certainly are subject to a variety of interpretations. At the same time, many possible methods can be used to serve client needs. If an attempt is to be made to work toward client goals rather than to emphasize performance of accustomed services, the ideas of many people are needed. Workers who are very familiar with client needs can help reach innovative solutions to long-standing problems.

People in human service settings tend to realize that everyone who will be affected by a decision should have a part in making it. All of the people whose commitment will be needed in carrying out a new solution should be involved in the problem-solving process. All of the people whose individual objectives will lead to the meeting of organizational goals should be part of the goal-setting process.

Participative Decision Making (PDM) and participative management have evolved as generic terms for involving employees in greater decision making, based on the human resources theories of Likert, McGregor, and others, as reviewed in Chapter 4. PDM is defined here as "actual staff involvement, whether formal or informal, direct or indirect, in decision processes regarding issues affecting the structure, funding, staffing, or programming" of the organization (Ramsdell, 1994, p. 58). PDM is not an either/or factor but is on a continuum from no involvement in the decision to "complete control or veto power over the decision" (Ramsdell, 1994, p. 58). In one test of the use of PDM, Packard (1989) found that child protective services units whose supervisors were seen as more participative had higher performance and job satisfaction than those with less PDM. Interestingly, Packard (1993) also discovered that these supervisors felt that workers were capable of much more PDM than they were currently allowed, suggesting that this is an underused approach.

To respond to this opportunity, Shera and Page (1995) suggest strategies for employee empowerment that allow greater PDM: at the organizational level, this can happen through a culture of shared leadership and meeting chairing, team problem solving and decision making, and flexible job designs. Effective communication, rewarding employee initiative, mutual (two-way) feedback, and employee development can enhance empowerment. Shera and Page add that the agency's service delivery technology (for example, focusing on client outcomes) and information sharing through computers can be empowering. Bowditch, Buono, and Stewart (2008) suggest that empowerment depends on employees' knowledge of organizational expectations, awareness that they will be rewarded for their contributions, possession of appropriate knowledge and skills, and the power to make relevant decisions. The facts that human service workers are likely to want more PDM, that supervisors and managers believe they are capable of more PDM (Packard, 1993), and that there is growing evidence of the effectiveness of PDM with skilled and motivated workers (Pine & Healy, 2007) suggest that supervisors should look for opportunities to increase their use of PDM.

PDM is often used in group settings, such as a team of a supervisor and her or his subordinates. Human service professionals are often very familiar with principles of group dynamics, but they may have difficulty applying them when they serve in supervisory capacities in their own agency settings. A few basic guidelines can help in the process.

First, when a group of colleagues is expected to make a decision, develop a plan, or solve a problem, be sure to clarify beforehand what constraints might be present. Groups in human service settings often spend endless hours developing novel solutions only to learn later that their ideas cannot be implemented because of budgetary constraints, little-known federal regulations, specifics in the agency's bylaws, or opposition of a powerful board member. After this happens several times, workers' commitment to involve themselves in agency governance lessens, and a low degree of energy is available to the task.

Second, clarify the purpose of a meeting or task force. Sometimes there is misunderstanding concerning the purpose of a procedure, whether it involves a face-to-face meeting, a series of task force projects, or individual interviews and questionnaires. The people who are asked to give input need to know whether the process they are involved in is meant to provide useful advice to a problem solver or whether they, as a group, will be asked to solve the problem or submit the plan of action. A meeting, like an agency plan, must be seen as a means to some specific end.

Third, clarify the procedures to be used. Just as participants must be aware of the goals toward which they are working, they must also be privy to the process being used. Clarity concerning procedural questions is especially important in human service settings, in which clear-cut guidelines are often lacking and participants can be expected to be reasonably expert in using a variety of processes. Many human service workers know how to use such approaches as brainstorming and priority setting with clients but fail to use such useful tools in the context of their own meetings.

Fourth, pay attention to process variables. A major concern in democratic supervision is the blending of concern for task with concern for people or relationships. As workers join in a mutual search for effective solutions, they need to stop and check the process of their own interactions. This awareness of human interactions is an important part of the leadership process and one that cannot be left to chance.

Fifth, choose carefully who is to be involved in each problem-solving process. The human service professional as leader often makes the error of involving too many or too few people in a problem-solving or planning process. It is well worth the time spent to identify, as specifically as possible, who will be affected by a particular decision and then to involve all the people listed in the decision-making process. At the same time, there is a need to recognize the differences between major and minor problems and to use human resources wisely. A large number of people, including volunteers, should be involved in setting broad agency goals; a small number of people should strive to set the specific objectives of one individual or work unit. A large number of people should be involved in seeking the solution to a major problem; a small number should work actively on the elimination of a minor annoyance.

In the long run, it is up to the supervisor to recognize that human service workers bring a variety of needs and motivations to the work setting and that they can meet those needs most effectively if they are actively involved in controlling the quality of their own work lives.

Challenges in Supervision

Inevitable problems and challenges in supervising staff can typically be handled using techniques already discussed. However, even though a supervisor does everything "right," sometimes disciplinary action is necessary. The agency should have a fair and clearly outlined progressive discipline procedure in its personnel manual, and the supervisor should ensure that the worker is aware of the process and that it is followed precisely if it is needed.

Weinbach and Taylor (2011, pp. 257–260) outline a useful progressive discipline process through which a problem may be addressed as early as possible, using the appropriate level of intervention. If work performance is below expectations, the worker should receive fair and objective feedback as soon as possible. This action is often enough to get performance on track again. If the employee does not respond to such efforts, a verbal reprimand ("a direct, private, and confidential communication of the staff member's shortcomings") (Weinbach and Taylor, 2011, p. 258) may be necessary. A common occurrence in organizations should be avoided: giving a group reprimand at a staff meeting when only one worker is at fault. Comments such as "Staff should stop being rude to clients" leave all wondering whether they are doing anything wrong and inevitably lower morale. If verbal reprimands are not effective, a written reprimand, with a copy for the employee's personnel file, may be needed. This should list specific behaviors that need to be changed, the expected behavior, and a time line. At this point, and before all subsequent steps, the supervisor's manager should be informed and consulted. If necessary, a next step may be a behavioral contract indicating specific steps to be taken to remedy the performance problems.

Some organizations have additional procedures such as provisions for suspensions without pay. Transfers of staff may be warranted in particular circumstances, such as personality or other situational factors, but should not be used to move problem employees with no prospect of a behavior change.

Termination of a worker is the next step and normally occurs only for unsatisfactory performance that has not been corrected despite explicit attempts or for gross misconduct, such as sexual involvement with a client. Termination for gross misconduct can normally occur "on the spot," without using progressive discipline, but agency procedures and standards still need to be followed.

Rivas (1998) and Weinbach and Taylor (2008) both offer useful guidelines for handling termination. At the termination interview, the supervisor needs to be not only fair and considerate but also absolutely clear that the employee is being terminated and that the decision is not negotiable. The reasons for the termination should at this point not be surprises, and they should be stated clearly in behaviorally specific terms. If the agency has an appeal or grievance procedure, the worker should be made aware of it. Of course, the worker should be treated with dignity and respect, and support in the form of suggestions for new employment, education, or behavior change may be offered. An exit interview may be offered, in which mutual feedback and a debriefing of the worker's experience at the agency can be reviewed. The supervisor should also take any necessary steps to prevent or minimize disruption to the workplace by addressing any organizational climate issues that emerge.

Making the Transition to the Supervisory Role

Many new supervisors find the transition from practitioner to manager and motivator of others difficult to make. Managerial functions can be carried out effectively by human service professionals if their clinical training is supplemented by the development of leadership skills.

Yet the transition from service provider to supervisor is by no means easy. The professional must move from the position of being nonjudgmental with clients to one of being an evaluator of workers, from a stance of encouraging clients to take total responsibility for their own goals to one of motivating other human service workers to strive toward the meeting of mutually accepted objectives. These sometimes subtle differences often lead to ineffective supervision, with the individual either placing total focus on relationship behavior at the expense of the tasks to be performed or, recognizing that accustomed behaviors are not workable in this new situation, focusing total attention on the task in an authoritarian style. These difficulties in finding a comfortable leadership style are exacerbated by the problems inherent in human service organizations: the facts that appraisal of the quality of work is difficult and that those being supervised are often professionals who themselves have little interest in conforming to organizationally defined expectations.

A number of other transitional issues are involved in moving from direct practitioner to supervisor, not the least of which is the shift in both position and occupation, requiring new sets of skills and knowledge and involving greater responsibilities and authority. According to Kadushin (1985), the supervisor "has responsibility to the supervisees for administration, education, and support, and ultimate responsibility for service to the client." Additionally, he or she "assumes greater responsibility for policy formulation in the agency and community-agency relationships," and, "instead of being responsible for a caseload, the supervisor is now responsible for a number of caseloads" (p. 299).

Adaptation to the exercise of authority is another issue facing the new supervisor. The principle of client self-determination, so protected and promoted in direct practice, does not enjoy the same prominence in the supervisor-supervisee relationship. As an employee of the agency, the worker is subject to the organization's policies and procedures and its administrative directives, commonly implemented by the supervisor. The worker's freedom of choice is usually limited to complying with those policies, procedures, and directives or selecting to work elsewhere. By the same token, the supervisor has no choice but to enforce administrative dicta if the supervisor wishes to remain in that position. This is not to say that workers cannot and should not be allowed to participate in decision making. What it does mean is that in some cases workers will not accept administrative decisions and that it is the supervisor's responsibility to exercise the authority inherent in the position to ensure that these decisions are carried out. The new supervisor must therefore learn to live with the consequences of sometimes enforcing unpopular decisions.

Another transitional issue is one of either partially or completely giving up the satisfaction of direct therapeutic contact with clients in favor of nontherapeutic contact with supervisees. In his or her new role and occupation, the supervisor learns to derive satisfaction from serving clients through others and from helping workers grow and develop professionally.

The shift from worker to supervisor thus entails several changes in perspectives and behaviors, in allegiances and responsibilities.

> In accepting the transition, the new supervisors face the complex processes of developing a clear conception of what the new position entails behaviorally and attitudinally; they have to divest themselves of old behaviors and attitudes appropriate to the direct service worker's position and learn and commit themselves to behavior and attitudes appropriate to the new position; they have to emotionally accept a changed image of themselves and a changed relationship with former peers and newly acquired colleagues. (Kadushin, 1985, p. 306)

Transition involves change, and change can be painful. Change, however, can also offer the opportunity for personal development and self-actualization, and it is in this latter dimension that the neophyte supervisor can find solace and encouragement.

Summary

Many human service professionals find themselves in supervisory positions at some point in their careers. In this important role, they work closely with supervisees to help them play their parts in assisting clients and accomplishing the organization's mission. Across all supervisory roles, supervisors provide encouragement, build motivation, increase the mutuality of individual and organizational goals, enhance confidence, carry out ongoing assessments, and provide supervisees with fair and prompt feedback. In clinical supervision, the specific focus is on increasing supervisees' success in their interactions with clients, with particular emphasis placed on multicultural competence. Because motivation is at the heart of the supervisee's professional development, supervisors understand and are able to apply the principles of motivation within a climate of participative decision making.

Competency-Building Activity 7.1: Supervision

In your most recent competency-building activities, you designed an organizational chart for your hypothetical program or agency and then went on to identify some of the jobs that would need to be created in order to carry out your mission. Now, it is time to consider your organization's supervisory needs.

1. As you examine your organizational chart, see whether you have a clear way to identify the key supervisory roles that need to be played. Do you have a clear picture of what the supervisory relationships might be in your organization? Identify the supervisory pairs that would carry out general and clinical supervision.
2. In the previous chapter, you developed some ideas about a particular job that would need to be filled. Once this job is filled, what would be the most important issues that a supervisor would need to address?

Case Activity 7.1: The Token Economy

Having worked as a therapist for a number of years, Jim Forrest had developed a high level of expertise in dealing with problems related to substance abuse. His work had included jobs in several settings, including a short-term detoxification program in a hospital, a community-based methadone treatment center, and a community mental health outpatient program.

Although his work with clients had always been satisfying, two things continued to trouble him. One major issue for Forrest was that his experience had convinced him that his clients' milieu was more important than any other aspect of treatment. Although one-to-one counseling could be helpful, it was always less important than the reinforcement clients got for various behaviors in their immediate social environments.

The other aspect of his work that tended to trouble him was the question of management. As a professional therapist, he had grown impatient with the pressure on him to stick to specific time lines and methods regardless of his clients' needs. In each agency, managers tended to create methods of operation based more on business principles and treatment costs than on the effects of various treatment modalities. Forrest felt that given the chance to do what he felt was best for his clients, he could work both effectively and efficiently.

Forrest finally had the chance to try out his ideas when he was invited by a former colleague to take on a job as head of a newly funded detoxification program being set up in one wing of the local community mental health center. The program had been funded to provide short-term services, and two of the therapists from the previous, smaller program were to remain on staff. With this exception, Jim would be free to develop the program in whatever way he saw fit. Funding was sufficient to provide for the hiring of a staff of four more professional therapists and eight paraprofessionals.

Forrest began interviewing potential employees, telling each of them the same thing. The program would be based on use of a token economy, meaning that clients would receive concrete and specific reinforcements for behaviors that were consistent with responsible, adult conduct. Every staff member would need to be involved in recording and reinforcing appropriate client behaviors, for only then would the clients begin to learn new ways of dealing with their environment. Beyond this "bottom line" of commitment to the token economy as a treatment modality, professionals would be free to set their own hours and work with clients according to their best interests. Newcomers would be more closely supervised at first. Later they, too, might have the kind of freedom already granted to the experienced professionals.

Most of the new workers started in at their tasks with a high degree of enthusiasm. It was like a dream come true, and after a few weeks, Forrest began to think that he was already seeing results in terms of client change. A few problems, however, were beginning to surface.

First, Hugh Schmidt, one of the two therapists who had already been employed at the center, began to complain to anyone who would listen about the idea of the token economy. Schmidt believed that long-term therapy, insight, and intrapsychic change were the only ways to deal with substance abusers. Changes in behavior could not get at the root cause of the problem, and the token economy could change only concrete behavior, not attitudes. He continued to work with clients in the same way he always had, but the token economy was constantly being sabotaged.

Another member of the professional staff was troubled not by the token economy but by the freedom Forrest allowed the employees. Carol Cooke pointed out that although the staff members had been enthusiastic at first, they would not maintain a high level of commitment unless they were aware of the rules and regulations governing their own behaviors. Forrest scoffed at these concerns until one Friday afternoon when he had to make a presentation at an out-of-town conference. When he realized he had forgotten something, he called the office. Not one of the professional staff members was there.

The problems Forrest had begun to face were minor, but they started to make him think. Could he maintain a central focus in the program if every member of the professional staff were not necessarily committed to it? Could he trust the professional staff in the way he had always wished to be trusted? The challenges began to seem a little more difficult than he had expected.

1. What do you think of Jim Forrest's approach to the position of program administration? What are his strengths and weaknesses in dealing with his new leadership position?
2. If you were Forrest, what would you do about the problem Hugh Schmidt's attitude poses? Is it necessary for the staff to work as a closely knit team, or is there room for a great deal of variation?
3. What would you do about the problem Carol Cooke poses? Do employees—even trained professionals—need clearer behavioral guidelines than Forrest provided?

4. Do you think Forrest has the potential to be more effective than the business-oriented professional managers he had encountered before?

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Useful Web Resources

American Board of Examiners in Clinical Social Work. http://www.abecsw.org/.

Association for Counselor Education and Supervision (A Division of the American Counseling Association). http://www.acesonline.net/.

Association of Psychology Postdoctoral and Internship Centers. http://www.appic.org/.

Child Life Council Clinical Supervision Statement. http://www.childlife.org/files/ClinicalSupervisionPS08.pdf.

National Association of Social Workers. http://www.naswdc.org/.

U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services. Child Welfare Information Gateway. Clinical Supervision. http://www.childwelfare.gov/management/mgmt_supervision/clinical/.

Management of Human Service Programs, Fifth Edition
Chapter 7: Building Supervisory Relationships
ISBN: 9780840034274 Authors: Judith A. Lewis, Thomas R. Packard, Michael D. Lewis