

The Role, Selection and Preparation of the Supervisor in the Management of the Organization

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Abstract: In many organizations, the changes in business processes and the way to implement the activities put in focus the role of the supervisor, the way he/she is selected and his professional training. This is the person who is the connecting unit between the proper running of the organization and implementation of the strategy and tactics defined by senior management. The aim of this publication is to examine some features of the work of the supervisor and his contribution to the management of the organization.

Index terms: organization, supervisor, management
JEL: D74, M12, M54

I. INTRODUCTION

Always has the supervisory role in the organization aroused great interest in the structure of the formal system. This is the man in the management, whose task is to control and guide people who work outside the field of management, i.e. workers (contractors). He is responsible for achieving the objectives of the subject system and the way it will affect the people to implement them. The Supervisor is the link between the heads of the higher levels of the organization and employees (R. Likert, 1961, p. 113). Therefore, its role and behavior are important for the company development and the results achieved.

II. THE ROLE, SELECTION AND PREPARATION OF THE SUPERVISOR IN THE MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION

The role of the supervisor stands out with the research in the city of Hawthorne. The research work has been conducted by E. Mayo, F. Roethlisberger and their team. They reflect the concept of human relations in a production environment, and one of the main issues associated with the behavior of the supervisor and his attitude towards his subordinates. Later, researchers at the University of Michigan and their followers, conclude that there is no constant pattern between productivity and job satisfaction.

The foundation of this understanding comes the work of the supervisor as well- to monitor the implementation of the objectives, the motivation of the people and performance (effectiveness) of their work.

In the recent years, the role of supervisor has faded, perhaps because of the focus on behalf of the senior management towards strategic goals, the dynamics of organizational change and looking for options for long-term development. However, it must be remembered that his role is critical to the success of the organization. While managers from the high and medium level perform administrative purposes or communicate with other managers and employees, the supervisor works with people in the manufacturing sector (in the industrial enterprises). This is the person who translated the instructions of his superiors to the lower part of the organization, and while monitoring and reporting for the results that are achieved by the workers.

In the 40s of the last century the federal legislation in the U.S. and the decree on labor-management relations in the country regulated the role and functions of the supervisor. In the organization he is perceived as "a person who has authority over employees to be hired or fired, punished or encouraged, manages or advises them and be the person with a fair assessment to others" (A. Sartain & A. Baker, 1978). The functions of the supervisor will depend on the type of organization and the role assigned by the superiors.

A significant study to analyze the levels of management in the organization was made by L. Porter (L. Porter, 1959, pp. 183-186), who in a working environment examines the functions of 172 supervisors, 291 executives and 320 production workers. Porter compares them in rotation (in threes), each person can get a self-assessment, according to the functions and their role in the workplace. The results showed that supervisors perceived as cautious, cool, thoughtful, accurate to their tasks, responsible, fair and honest. The Managers from the upper echelons/structures of the organization are determined by resourceful, having logical thinking, honest, socializing, resistant to pressure of work, worthy of respect, adaptive and generous. Production workers were perceived as ambitious, productive, efficient, friendly, stable and fast adapting to organizational changes.

Porter's thesis of the study of the three groups is that supervisors were perceived as moderators, even conservative figures acting as a "buffer" between the influence of superiors and control over subordinates. For the senior managers, the self-assessment was that they were successful entrepreneurs who had great contribution to the development of the organization. Workers are not defined as a specific factor that have influence on the organizational potential. The conclusion from the study of

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Porter is that supervisors have low self-esteem about themselves because they feel uncomfortable with the fact that they are somewhere "in the middle" in the organization. This contradiction can be defined as follows (E. Zahariev, 2001, p. 503):

- Supervisor as a "key figure" in the management. It is the direct communication link. She/he is considered as performing managerial duties and enjoys the corresponding status.

- Supervisor, as a "man in the middle". Her/his status is uncertain, the supervisor is in "no man's land" – neither the workers accept her/him as one of them, nor is she/he considered a part of the management.

- Supervisor, as "the man from the periphery." She/he is there, but only as a presence. She/he has an awkward position and feels awkward.

- Supervisor, as "the other kind of worker." Actually she/he is no more important than the ordinary workers, despite receiving higher remuneration and dress differently. He's just a "titled worker."

- Supervisor, as a person responsible for the human factor. She/he is responsible for maintaining the morale and good psychological climate. Technical tasks entrusted to professionals and the supervisor is responsible for the human relations.

Based on these contradictions some problems arise in the work of the operation supervisor, some of the most significant are the following (E. Zahariev, 2001, pp. 503-504):

- Incompatibility of loyalty: to whom to be loyal – to a group that is subject to management or to which he is subject.

- Ignoring the status on behalf of her/his superiors and having only limited access to senior management of the organization.

- Insufficient power or unexplained rights.

- Insufficient awareness of the organization's policy.

- In many organizations, supervisors do not undergo special training.

To work effectively in the organization, the supervisor must possess the following important skills (B. Georgopoulos & F. Mann, 1962, pp. 430-431):

- *Administrative competencies*

These competencies for the supervisor are required to follow the policies and procedures of the organization, which is essential for the effective implementation of the work. Any change in them must be explained to workers who are engaged in productive activities. On the other hand, the supervisor can respond appropriately to the environment and efficiently achieve their goals.

- *Competence in the field of human resources*

Supervisors spend most of their working time in communication with subordinates or managers of the organization. In the first case, they give instructions and guidance to workers, the latter – they give account for the results to their superiors. All this requires competence in communication skills and teamwork. The argument is

further strengthened when requirements arise between targets and productivity of workers.

- *Technical competence*

Supervisor must not only have current updated competencies in the field of engineering and technology, but also she/he should be able to decide the problems in these areas. In other words, to do the job for which information is needed, ingenuity and intelligence to deal with in critical or emergency situations.

The views on the work of the supervisor in the organization are treated differently, the most important of which are the following (B. Sember & T. Sember, 2007, pp. 59-136; H. Rothe, 1951, pp. 291-301; S. Peres, 1962, pp. 405-410):

- *Setting rational goals to the subordinates*

For the effective work of the supervisor, he needs to know which goals have higher priority and whether they will be within the competence of subordinates. If targets are set too low and are considered routine, workers can underestimate them, which will reflect the positive outcome of the activity. Conversely, their complexity can alienate them from labor, can discourage them and cause personnel resistance.

- *Creating a suitable working environment*

To achieve the objectives of the organization, the supervisor must be able to positively influence the people who he manages, encourage them to assess each initiative and willingness to work. Skillfully combining motivational mechanisms and formal rules for achieving the objectives is required. Where necessary administrative sanctions should be applied to maintain order. Otherwise the possible arbitrariness of group members may reflect negatively on the work performance and the corporate activities.

- *Improvement of methods and techniques used at work*

The Supervisor must diversify the methods and techniques of work, implementing innovative approaches that activate the creative potential of the staff. These must be consistent with the organization's management, if new guidelines for the implementation of goals and objectives are required. Otherwise negative results might come, if experiments with no real training and instruction to workers about upcoming innovations are conducted.

- *Delegation of authority, if necessary*

In many organizations, supervisors are overworked and it is difficult for them to adapt to different aspects of the activity. They must allocate time and efforts into those areas that require priority intervention. This requires to delegate rights to workers to perform standard procedures of expertise and it does not require the mandatory participation on behalf of the supervisor.

- *Providing moral support and professional support/help to subordinates*

The Supervisor should be fair to the people who are managed by him, this requires informing them about upcoming changes in the work, discussing problems, specifying their nature and solving them. Besides, He

should be able to offer professional assistance to anyone who needs one, regardless of his status/position in the organization.

○ *Ethical behavior and loyalty in work*

Supervisors should be ethical, not only to their peers, but also to superiors. They should be loyal to the organization's objectives, priorities and interests. Ethical behavior is also reflected in its relations with subordinates, which requires credibility (when necessary), respecting their needs, understanding their concerns, etc. Senior managers assign tasks/responsibilities and expect their performance, while the supervisors have a direct contact with the workers. They need to understand what the expectations are, the moods and motivation to work and most importantly to help them do it better. This cannot happen if they are not ethical to their behavior.

○ *Develop a personal career and that of subordinates*

A well-trained supervisor seeks to develop professionally and continuously improve their skills. High qualification provides a real opportunity for career development and selection of a higher position in the structure of the organization. The supervisor encourages subordinates, helping them to work and constantly develops empathy for them and contributes to their professional prosperity. This includes training programs for the workers who are trained in new ways of working; they are also trained how to use new technological equipment and how to improve business practices, etc.

○ *Cost Control (if this option is possible and applicable)*

In some organizations, the supervisor shall be entitled to draw up and administer an operating budget, obliging him to make accurate decisions about spending funds (e.g. ordering materials or machinery parts). Costs are part of the budget and the rational spending is a guarantee of a job well done. In other organizations, this function is entrusted to a functional specialists and is controlled by senior management.

One of the important roles of the supervisor is to make decisions at work that are effective, provided that the following steps (E. Zahariev, 2001, pp. 505-506):

1. *Establishment of the facts*

- examination of the data;
- identification of existing rules and customs;
- conducting interviews with stakeholders;
- collection of views and different viewpoints;
- analysis of the whole situation.

2. *Judgment and decision making*

- comparison of the facts and assessment of their significance;
- compliance with the practices and policies of the organization;
- taking into account the specificity of objectives;
- not drawing hasty conclusions.

3. *Taking action*

- will the Supervisor alone implement the solution?
- how long will it take?
- shall the decision be awarded to the subordinates?

4. *Verification of results*

- how long will it take before the first inspection is made?
- how often will the control be supervised/made?
- to monitor for changes in attitudes, production, etc.;
- do the actions lead to better results?

The role and function of the supervisor is influenced by many factors that arise from globalization and the changes in the business environment and the complexity of the organization. The latter must adequately respond to business processes and the dynamics of the market. Supervisors face the following challenges:

○ *Changes in organization and the need for greater autonomy*

Today the modern organizations have to respond to the business environment, and one of the ways is to make radical (major) changes or to improve business processes. For this purpose we reduce the units in the organizational structure, cutting excess processes and all inefficient operations. We also create new schemes of work and the supervisor coordinates its operational performance. The supervisor must monitor the condition of the technical equipment and have the rights to make decisions to overcome the problems. To have more effective work, the supervisor needs more authority and responsibility in carrying out the various interventions of the lower management level. It is important that he aim at the following activities:

- to recruit people who are competent to do the job;
- to stimulate and motivate the subordinates;
- to set realistic standards for work;
- to implement efficient working methods.

○ *Striving to improve the quality of goods and services*

Today customers are demanding buyers who have their own requirements for the quality of goods and services. Their standardization gives way to the personal needs and interests, which requires a new approach to customers and satisfying their needs. Quality becomes a fundamental factor for competitiveness and the supervisor focuses on modern methods of its implementation. It is necessary to participate in shortening the time of making the products (services) and be responsible for testing of new technologies and approaches to work.

○ *Need of multifunctional capabilities*

Modern supervisors requires good professional qualifications and competences in different areas of the business. Concrete/narrow specialization is not very effective in terms of organizational changes and continuous technological progress. Supervisors need to solve problems of different nature, which requires an arsenal of skills and knowledge in the field of information and communication technologies. Quite a few companies use automated production process, while others rely on the intellect and the skills of people. They are a prerequisite for the improvement of knowledge, their constant innovation and effective use.

○ *Need for dealing with the (possible) resistance to the changes*

If supervisors need to be trained managers from the lower echelon, it is most likely that they have the same requirements to their subordinates. The latter will have to change their habits and skills to improve performance and increase the efficiency of labor, which creates resistance. It is a dangerous phenomenon that should not be underestimated if supervisors want to achieve optimal performance in their work.

The discipline among workers is an important issue to be decided by the supervisor without compromising its meaning. If he does not take action against violations or arbitrary actions, this may become a threat for the disruption the rhythm of work and for the reduction of efficiency.

According to Maier and Danielson (N. Maier & L. Danielson, 1956, pp. 319-323) supervisor may use two approaches to solve disciplinary problems - the punishments and the human relations. In the first, disciplinary actions are taken when established rules and procedures are violated, while the second seeks educational initiatives. In both cases, the supervisor is required to comply with certain requirements (E. Zahariev, 2001, pp. 507-508):

- to determine the purpose of the control procedure and intervention;
- to consider the policy of the organization and the existing practice;
- to act cool, not to lose self-conscience, regardless of the problem;
- not to go down/degrade himself to the level of the subject;
- to talk with the worker personally and in private;
- to maintain a professional tone, not to get personal;
- not to interfere with personal relations with the victim;
- to avoid evasiveness and uncertainties;
- to follow the facts, not rumors and intrigues;
- to make a decision when to use (to take effect) punishment;
- not to give hasty statements under emotional stress;
- to be fair in its assessment to the subordinates;
- not to comment on the penalty imposed;
- to document/write down the measures taken, noting and focusing on the results.

Today's organizations must be careful in the selection of supervisors and conduct courses for their training. This is one of the issues that affects the human resource policy and tactics for effective management. The choice of the supervisor shall be based on the requirements for the position for which the person is applying and must be evaluated according to his professional competence. In some sources (see H. Rothe, 1951, pp. 291-301) there are cases describes, where the supervisor has to deal with different aspects of the work. Candidates for the position of a supervisor should possess competencies in key areas such as:

- planning of operations and activities;

- communication;
- analysis of the situation;
- leadership;
- delegation of authority;
- making key decisions.

These requirements are ranged chronologically in a table covering the position for which you are applying and assessing the qualities of the candidate. The assessment is made on the basis of 16 scales, each having precise parameters - 1-4 (low), 5-8 (medium), 9-12 (high) and 13-16 (ultra high).

The first three requirements (planning, communication and analysis) show mostly the intellectual abilities of the candidate for the position of a supervisor. The remaining three (leadership, delegation and decision-making) are related to the way you work - effective or destructive.

After the observations and the results of the candidate for the position of a supervisor, it is necessary to put an assessment/mark which varies widely. It is formed, based on the scale and is marked by a line between its individual sections (1 to 16). The candidate who has shown the best results and meets the requirements for the position is hired. To finalize this process, certain methods for the selection of candidates can be used. They are the following (H. Clay, 1952, pp. 466-470; C. McDermid, 1962, pp. 22-25):

1. Interview with the applicant

The Interview with the applicant for a supervisor comes down to an informal discussion about what is expected of the work and how she/he will carry out the duties (checking the attitudes and motivation to work). It does not give a definite idea for the nature of the work or the candidate's qualities, but makes it possible to gain an overall vision for the position occupied and the behavior of the person (speech, gestures, way of dressing, charm, etc.).

2. Candidate's documents

Information on the technical proficiency and skills of the candidate can be identified by the documentation submitted in advance. It used to generate data on previous experience of the applicant, the position she/he had occupied, the development in profession and her/his personal interests. Age, education and acquired certificates, documents proving the professional achievements of the candidate are taken into account. This information should be compared with the data obtained from the interview.

3. Tests completed by the applicant

The tests are a tool used to assess the overall culture/ (general knowledge)/ of the supervisor and the specific skills she/he has in a working environment. They can be paper-based or in electronic form, and the questions are formulated according to the type of organization and nature of work. Sometimes the tests are used in order to increase the efficiency of operation of the supervisor, but it should be borne in mind that the "most of the problems arise from poorly organized work and not so much from the lack of skills" (M. Haire, 1950, pp. 42-51).

4. *Psychological and health assessment of the candidate*

Every candidate for the position of a supervisor should be carefully evaluated by compiling an individual profile of manners and his way of behavior. It is important fact that the applicant should be mentally fit for the job and should be able to withstand the stress of the environment. The candidate/applicant is subjected to psychological and medical tests, to diagnose her/his medical and psychological condition (fitness) for work.

5. *A Combined approach for evaluation of the candidate*

The final assessment of the candidate for the position of a supervisor is formed by summing the results from previous rounds of selection. All the positive and negative aspects of competence and behavior of the individual are taken into account. The final assessment is marked on a form drawn up for each candidate. The senior management shall be informed of the results, then a written report of the successful candidate is offered and instructions for his appointment are expected.

To be effective in the workplace, the supervisor goes through advanced training programs and training. This is required in complicated business and higher qualification requirements for managers and executives. In the training programs for supervisors, special attention is paid to the following activities (J. Blase & J. Blase, 2004, pp. 51-84; B. Georgopoulos & F. Mann, 1962, pp. 430-438):

1. *Preparing for administrative competence*

Supervisors are trained in the areas of functional aspects of management (planning, organizing, controlling work, etc.) that are not less important than the other competencies. They affect the development of the whole system and they are the relationship with the higher levels of the organizational structure. For the Supervisor it is important to have a stable preparation for the selection and monitoring of supply, planning and operational management of production, diagnosing the operational tasks, understanding the management of expenses, etc.

2. *Preparing for competence in the field of human resources*

These skills require training for the behavior and the ability of supervisors to work with subordinates, superiors and the groups associated with the implementation of the goals and objectives of the organization. They are fundamentally different from the administrative and technical skills because you have to make decisions about the actions of people who are different in every situation. Various forms of training of the supervisors can be used - usually in the field of human resources, but often the methods of the situation, simulating problem and RPGs (role playing games) are also used. The method of the situation addresses the important issues that are often discussed before taking the appropriate decision. When simulating a problem, we generate data on its specificity, then a solution is looked for. In role-playing games, we form groups of supervisors to switch roles in solving a problem. Everyone is put on the position of the other. In written form, we summarize

the reasons for the reaction and behavior in a particular situation. This is done to develop a sense of empathy and to understand the behavior of others.

3. *Preparation for technical competence*

These competencies are specific to each industry and the training should be targeted at operational levels to perform the job. The supervisor must know the production technology in order to be useful for the people she/he works with. Training programs cover different aspects of the supervisor - maintenance of production equipment, understanding the technical documentation, knowledge of quality standards for finished/final products, the ability to work with automated manufacturing systems, etc.

III. CONCLUSION

The role of the supervisor in the organization is to maintain performance standards, to monitor policies, practices and procedures for the rational implementation. Therefore, it is necessary to communicate with the subordinates, to coordinate their work and to guide them. This position is the link between people's work and reporting up the chain of command – to the superiors. This is an activity that requires high competences in different areas of business and human behavior. By this publication, the following results were achieved:

- the specifics of the position of the supervisor in the organization is reasoned and justified;
- some aspects are reflected in the analysis of the role, selection and preparation of the supervisor in the management of the organization.

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