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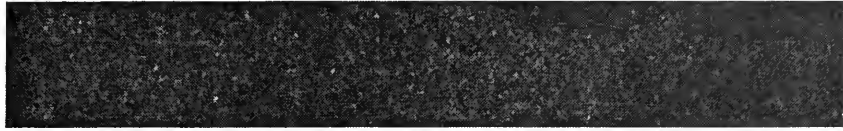








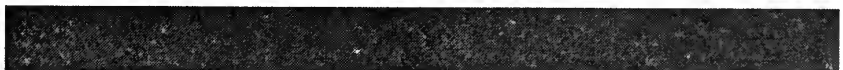
INSTITUTE OF LABOR AND  
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS



B U L L E T I N

# Supervisory Training – Why, What, How

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS BULLETIN



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## EDITORIAL NOTE

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This *Bulletin* series is designed to present periodically information and ideas on topics of current interest in labor and industrial relations. The presentation is non-technical and is designed for general, popular use. No effort is made to treat the topics exhaustively.

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## UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS BULLETIN

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# SUPERVISORY TRAINING — WHY, WHAT, HOW

By JOHN F. HUMES

"HERE'S A NEWS ITEM ABOUT YOUR COMPANY, DAN. 'Supervisory Training Group Has Graduation Ceremony; Dan Summers speaks to supervisors of ABC company on completion of training conferences.' "

Dan Summers and Bill Davis were sitting in the lounge of the American Legion hall, looking over the local newspapers. Dan was the plant manager of one of the town's most prosperous manufacturing establishments. Bill was the general foreman of the XYZ company, a somewhat smaller enterprise.

"Why do your supervisors need training?" Bill asked. "I thought everything went along so smoothly out at your plant that nobody would need to go to school."

"Well," said Dan, "everything doesn't go smoothly at ABC, but I must admit that it's a lot better than it used to be. And maybe our training program is partly the reason."

"I'd certainly be interested to know why you fellows went into that training business. It's always seemed a bit new-fangled to me."

"If you really would like to know, Bill, let me tell you some ancient history."

## Why Develop a Supervisory Training Program?

Dan then went back to the early beginnings of the ABC company, reviewing the struggles of two industrious brothers who had started, in a small way, to manufacture a product for which there developed a considerable demand. The story was like that of hundreds of other business enterprises in the United States — hard-working men of ability developing products which could be sold in a competitive market for profit. The existence of the ABC company depended, as always, on selling. If a sound business organization could be established and conducted efficiently, the result would mean both jobs for the community and profits for the owners. If the cost of operating the business was greater than the return from selling the product, the company would go out of business. Both jobs and profits would disappear.

The ABC company had been fortunate. It grew slowly; the

owners and managers and the workers got on well together. When a young man went to work at ABC, he usually stayed, and if he really wanted to, he could look forward to steady employment and advancement in the firm.

A few of the "old-timers" were still with the company, but most of them had passed on. The ranks had been filled with younger men. Some of these new people who had risen to jobs as foremen or supervisors had experienced more trouble in getting along well with their workers than had the old-timers. As the ABC company had grown in size, more organization had been developed; the relations between the workers and top management had become more indirect. The earlier feeling of personal understanding and friendliness had gone; contacts had become more impersonal and distant. Things were not as they once were, no doubt about it. This change in the life of the plant developed so gradually that it was scarcely noticed at first. But compared to the situation in the late 1930's, there was a considerable change. The change was not good — either for the company's management or for its more than 300 employees, a number of whom were now being laid off.

Then the war came. ABC expanded and employed many new people until at one time more than 500 were on the payroll. Some inexperienced men had been promoted to foremen, and the company experienced a lot of grief as a result.

Like a large number of the war industries, ABC set up a training program. Management was not much for it at first, but other companies were doing it, so ABC went along. The Federal Government sponsored programs known as J.I.T. (job instruction training) and E.S.M.W.T. (engineering, science, and management war training). Most of the ABC foremen and supervisors who enrolled in these programs took an interest in them. A few supervisors were downright enthusiastic. As might be expected, a small minority was apathetic and somewhat cynical about training. But all told, the interest was good, production increased, and plant morale improved.

Two groups of ABC foremen enrolled in a course called Human Relations. As with J.I.T., most of the foremen thought this human relations training was useful. Most of it was down-to-earth, common-sense material that all of them knew something about and could apply on the job. They found it helpful to talk about the prob-

lems they were meeting every day. The company was convinced that the discussions were having a good effect on both production and plant morale. When all the foremen had taken these courses, the ABC company stopped its formalized training. The war ended not long after that.

ABC required some time to make the readjustment to peacetime production. Like many other companies, it experienced confusion and even some conflict in the plant. About a year after the end of the war, ABC decided to develop more training for its supervisors. Some supervisors had returned from military service and were having a difficult time of it.

The company used the same instructor who had set up some of the courses for supervisors under the E.S.M.W.T. program. The new program included a public-speaking course, another in motion and time study, and a third course called Essentials of Supervision planned for recently promoted foremen.

It was the story in the local newspaper about the close of these courses that moved Bill Davis to ask Dan Summers why the ABC company needed supervisory training.

"Now," said Dan, "to answer your question more directly, let me put it this way . . ."

Here's the way Dan explained it:

1. The foreman's job has changed a great deal since the old days when you could get away with a good deal of driving and pushing around. Today the foreman has to be pretty much of a leader, must know how to get along with workers. *He must have considerable skill in human relations.*

2. The foreman is no longer the "Mister Big" he once was when he had things pretty much his own way when it came to hiring and firing and changing men around from job to job. Now he has to share responsibility with other departments and other supervisors, as well as with the union (if there is one in the plant). He must know how to give and take, to compromise, and to suppress his own wants and desires for the good of the plant and the welfare of the workers. *He must learn how to cooperate in his leadership on the job.*

3. This process of evolution which is still going on in the foreman's job has created a good bit of confusion in his mind as to just what his status is. Is the foreman a part of management? Or is he just a glorified worker? In this indefinite state of mind about his job, the foreman needs help in understanding the limits of his responsibility and his authority, his "place" in the company. *He must know his company's objectives, how its policies are administered, and how he fits into its organization.*

4. The foreman's responsibility to both management and men is widely recognized today. *Therefore, the foreman must know how to represent*

*his immediate fellow-workers fairly to management, and how also to interpret problems and policies to the workers.*

5. Since there is an ever-increasing demand for standard practices in production today, the foreman must know how to train employees, or to supervise others who may do the actual training. *The foreman must learn how to instruct.*

6. The foreman must realize that his company's success depends upon increased production, improved quality, and reduced unit-costs. *So the foreman must seek to improve performance, both his own and that of his workers.*

7. With the growth of unionism and its constantly increasing importance in management-labor relationships, *the foreman must learn how to get along with the union and its representatives.*

8. Because the foreman works with machines, equipment, and materials, he must become acquainted with some of the aspects of scientific management. Since he also works with people, individually and in groups, he must learn something about psychology and sociology. And as his own welfare, as well as that of all other employees and the company as a whole, is related to the changing economic structure of our society, he should know a good deal about industrial economics. In a word, *the foreman should be rather broadly informed about modern business organization, applied psychology, sociology, and economics.*

9. A foreman moves on to positions of greater importance when he demonstrates that he has the knowledge and the capacity to shoulder added responsibility. Therefore, *he should be able to prepare himself for advancement.*

10. Finally, there is a personal satisfaction that comes to anyone who can better himself in any way, improve his efficiency on the job and off. A foreman should be able to take advantage of all opportunities to improve himself. Of course, when a foreman improves himself, many others, including the company, benefit. *Training is, therefore, a source of personal satisfaction, as well as of immediate job skill.*

"Why do we go in for supervisory training?" Dan repeated. "Because we want to give our foremen the opportunity to improve themselves in these 10 ways. We believe that supervisory training is good not only for the individual foreman himself, but that it is good for the business as well."

"Well, Dan," said Bill Davis, "that's a fairly full bill of particulars. You have certainly pointed out some excellent reasons for a supervisory training program. I was interested in the emphasis you laid on the human relations aspect of supervisory training. I know that's one of the weaknesses out at our plant. Do you suppose it's a fairly general weakness in foremanship today?"

"I'm inclined to think it is, Bill. I remember the instructor telling us about a survey of 900 industrial foremen in Pennsylvania

in which they said that what they needed most to improve their performance was a broader understanding of human relations.”<sup>1</sup>

“Dan, didn’t you say that *you* remembered what the instructor said? I thought this course of training was only for the foremen in ABC. How did you get in on it?”

“I should have told you, Bill, that before starting with the foremen, the instructor urged top management to form a group and go through the course. He said taking the course ourselves would help us see what it was like and would make the foremen feel better about taking it. Although he didn’t say so, I’m sure he must have felt that there was a good bit we could learn, too. We felt that we couldn’t give as much time to the course as was planned for the foremen, so we got an abbreviated version. I’m sorry now we didn’t decide to take the whole works. I’m sure we missed a lot of important ideas that we could have used ourselves at higher levels of management.

“In that survey I just told you about,” Dan continued, “it was pointed out that education in human relations should include — actually start with — top management, since this level of any organization is often woefully weak in its understanding of the human element. Maybe this is another good reason why supervisory training should be undertaken.”

## Management’s Reasons for Supervisory Training

While the two friends go on discussing supervisory training, let us summarize some of the reasons which management has found for developing a comprehensive training program for supervisors from the first line to the top. Among those most frequently mentioned are:

1. Increased quantity of production.
2. Improvement in the quality of a product or service.
3. Reduction in operating costs.
4. Reduction in accidents.
5. Reduction in labor turnover.
6. Increase in suggestions from workers for mutual benefit.
7. Better understanding of company policies.
8. More effective discovery and development of efficient workers and foremen.
9. Increase in labor-management cooperation.
10. Improvement in plant morale.

If supervisory training helps achieve one or more of these objectives, it would appear to be a sound element of management policy. Since these 10 points are closely linked, training will probably pay off in improving the plant situation along several lines at once.

## What Supervisory Training Is

"I can see how supervisory training would help us at the XYZ company," Bill Davis went on, "that is, if it were to be done right, and we could get the foremen to go along with it. But we've got some old boys out there who wouldn't take very kindly to going to school and doing a lot of studying after working hours."

"Well, Bill," said Dan, "supervisory training isn't necessarily 'going to school,' and there need not be 'studying' if the foreman doesn't want to do any. But a little study and thinking about his job certainly won't harm anybody."

"Just what is supervisory training then, Dan?"

"Supervisory training means different things to different people, Bill. To me, it means any educational activity designed to improve the supervisor's understanding of his job. Most of the training programs for supervisors have been set up for foremen — those representatives of management who are in direct contact with the working group. We have had training courses, however, for supervisors at every level in the company, even at the highest level of authority.

"One thing our instructor made clear to us was that supervisory training was really an educational process. We sometimes think of training as learning to perform a set of movements or operations more efficiently, but it has a much broader meaning and can be applied to training in the control of emotions or the development of attitudes. Training is actually only one phase of education, but training as applied to supervisors is definitely an educational activity.

"One thing I'd like to point out, Bill, is that what we are talking about here is not job training, as such — at least in the way we have often thought about job training. At ABC, we haven't been particularly concerned about job training as mechanical-skill training. We've had that kind of training for everybody in the plant for quite a while. All our foremen had this skill training

somewhere along the line. What I'm talking about here is education in handling human relations on the job. Of course, it is really job training too, but it's at a different level. It relates to the foremen's attitudes and practices in dealing with people, not with machines or materials."

"That all sounds a little stuffy to me, Dan. What I'd like to know is, just what do these training fellows teach the foremen?"

"Well, Bill, that all depends upon what kind of a course is being given. If it is Job Evaluation, for instance, the instructor gets into some rather detailed technicalities about how jobs differ as to their various elements. He may discuss amount of strength and energy required to do the job, the required pace, and the analysis of motions in every operation. He would compare also the length of time necessary to learn the various jobs, the differences in skill and knowledge, the responsibility, judgment, initiative required of the worker, and the safety factors of various jobs. Then the foremen would be shown how points, or values, are placed on all these elements and how to translate the points into dollars and cents per hour or per week. All this material goes into Job Evaluation, so the foreman can deal more intelligently with the questions which his workers will naturally raise about the plan under which they work."

"But, Dan, the foremen don't rate the jobs, do they? They don't out at our place. Why go into all that with them?"

"Well, we believe, like many others, that such training gives the foremen a broader knowledge of the way things are done, and because of that knowledge, they are better able to perform their jobs."

## **Human Relations Training**

"What about this human relations you speak about? How can anyone learn that in a classroom?"

"That's a fair question, Bill. Here's the way I'd answer it:

"When you boil it all down, 'human relations' really means the relationship of management and men, owner and worker, capital and labor, however you want to put it. Of course, the human element is not the only factor of importance in this relationship. There are economic, social, and political considerations as well. Since we are looking at human relations for the moment, we had better not

complicate the discussion by bringing in all these other factors. But you can't ignore them. Human relations touches almost every phase of modern industry.

"True, you can't learn everything you need to know about human relations from classroom discussion, but certainly some ideas can be developed and discussed in such a way that you may be in a better position to cope with human situations when they turn up.

"I might point out, Bill, that we don't carry on our human relations training in the same kind of class we use in Job Evaluation. In Job Evaluation, we necessarily give a lot of direct instruction in the techniques of job analysis and classification. In our human relations classes, we generally try to develop our materials around the table in informal discussion groups. I guess you'd call this the conference method. I'd like to tell you more about this conference process later on.

"The everlasting problem of industry has revolved around employer-employee conflict. The basis for much, but not all, of this conflict has been a lack of understanding of each other's objectives, interests, ambitions, and real needs. These are human relations questions and they can be answered only when each group sincerely tries to get to the deep roots of the questions from which differences spring."

Dan went on to explain that any course of study designed to help solve problems of industrial relations involving human conflict must get down to some fairly elemental items of human nature.

For example, one conference series introduced such subjects for consideration as these:

1. The complex makeup of human nature, and how foremen can use this knowledge to the advantage of both worker and employer.
2. The differences in people, and how to understand them.
3. How personality is developed, and how to deal with the people who have troublesome personalities.
4. How to handle complaints and grievances.
5. The development of leadership qualities.
6. Problems of the job, such as fatigue, monotony, accidents, absenteeism, slow-downs, and low morale.
7. The foreman and his relationship with the union.
8. The foreman and his relationship with the public.
9. The human element in labor relations.



"Within reason." Dan continued, "I suppose you could discuss almost anything that has any bearing on the crosscurrents of labor-management relations.

"There was another series of conferences, in fact the first one we decided to organize after the war, which we called the Elements of Supervision. There was a good deal about human relations in it, but we emphasized industrial organization — responsibility of the foreman's job and his authority, how to organize and manage a department, how policies are interpreted to employees, interpretation of the union contract, planning and waste control, how to instruct new workers, handling promotions and discharges and transfers, job improvement, and safety.

"One thing we did rather successfully at ABC was to supplement our training conferences with some individual coaching on the job. We have some excellent supervisors, if I do say it myself, and these men were assigned to look after the newer foremen.

"We felt that it wasn't enough just to discuss our problems in conference. If we did nothing to solve those problems out on the job, then we might just as well not have any training program at all. So we followed up our discussions with personal analysis by the foreman and the instructor. Although they didn't always come out with the answer to the problem, this combination of conference, discussion, and individual follow-up often met with encouraging success.

"What is supervisory training? Why, Bill, it is any educational effort designed to meet the needs of supervisors in carrying out their jobs. These needs vary from plant to plant, from job to job, from individual to individual. When the needs are discovered, analyzed, and classified, programs of training can be organized to help fill the gap.

"When you put supervisory training on the basis of *need* — and I don't see any other justifiable one — I think you can see as well as I that there are many courses of various kinds that could be set up."

Bill broke in. "But unless these various courses that you speak about can be offered in some systematic order, it would seem to me that they might result in just a hodge-podge and have very little lasting value."

"Perhaps that's so, Bill, but isn't it possible that something like

a course of study might be built up and presented in a more or less logical order? We have planned a series of courses which we expect to take part in over the next four or five years at ABC. I don't know whether or not it's a logical plan; we might even change it as we go along. But right now it appears to meet our needs. The series starts out with Elements of Industrial Supervision and is followed by Human Relations in Supervision. Then there are a number of optional courses, including Motion and Time Study, Public Speaking, and Merit Rating. After these, we have planned to offer Industrial Economics, Labor Law, and Personnel Administration. These will be followed by Industrial Management Problems, Personnel Administration for Supervisors, and a kind of 'refresher' course in human relations which we are going to call Leadership in Supervision. We have under consideration three more courses — Quality Control, Materials Control, and Accident Prevention.

"As I said, I don't know if these courses are logically arranged, but for the present they seem to be scheduled to meet our most pressing training needs. The main point to remember is that in whatever order you put these, or other, subjects, the training program as a whole should be geared to the real needs of the company. What fits our needs at ABC may not be useful to you at XYZ. You can develop the subjects you need and make up a 'curriculum' — the order of subjects — to fit the situation as it now exists in your plant. As the situation changes, you can bring in new subjects or change the order.

"The need's the thing; education is useful only when it meets the need. Sometimes, though, a training man from outside the plant can help you in developing the right courses and pitching them at the right level. He can often bring the training experience of other companies to bear on your problems in a way that will pay off in results without too much trial and error along the way."

## **How Supervisory Training Is Carried On**

Bill broke in again. "You've given me a good idea, Dan, of why you go in for supervisory training at ABC and what supervisory training is. But just how does it work? How do the wheels go around? Can you tell me?"

"Sure, Bill, I can tell you how it's done at our plant. It can be

done differently at different places to meet particular needs, but I can give you some idea how we go about it."

"What I'd like to know," put in Bill, "what I'd like to know first of all is who goes to these training schools. Is it just the foremen, or do the top people go too? I know some people out at our place you couldn't get near a school of any kind."

"Don't keep calling it school, Bill," Dan said. "It isn't school in the ordinary sense of the word. As I said, the training at ABC is done in conferences."

"Well, we have conferences at XYZ too," said Bill, "but everybody comes away from them in a bad humor. When the boss calls us in, he drones on and on about costs, costs, costs. And he lays down the law. Nobody dares to speak up in self-defense since the time Jim Black tried to tell him that his costs were up because of the obsolete equipment in his department. Did he get his ears pinned back!

"Sometimes my boss gets me to hold the meeting," Bill went on, "when he can't make it himself. Then it's just the other way around. Everybody talks at once. But it all boils down to nothing but an airing of gripes.

"Excuse me, Dan. Go ahead and give me the story." And Bill settled back.

"I have an idea," said Dan, "that your people might profit from this human relations training. As a matter of fact, when we started our program after the war — I think I told you — we got together a group of our executives. We held six or seven meetings to get some interchange of ideas about our problems and to come to a better understanding of them at all levels of management. We started with a complete survey of our post-war situation."

"When was this survey made?" asked Bill.

"Perhaps I'd better start at the beginning, Bill, and go on step by step.

"Early in 1946, we reviewed our previous experience. We were still in the tough job of reconverting and too busy to think about training. Along about August someone got the notion that we ought to have some training in Job Evaluation since we were in the midst of some changes that involved reclassification of jobs, which meant some rate changes too.

"When we looked the situation over, we thought that it might

be better if we started with a course on the Elements of Supervision, in order to set the stage for the more technical work in Job Evaluation. We all came around to the point of view that perhaps our foremen might be better prepared for the Job Evaluation course if they could first talk over some of our plant problems, about which they had a good bit of difference of opinion and considerable confusion.

"As I told you before, our executive group was 'briefed' on this Elements of Supervision course sometime in September. We attended six meetings altogether; the course for the foremen was set up on the basis of sixteen meetings. Through mutual agreement between the executives and the instructor, the original course was altered somewhat to meet our immediate plant needs more closely. Because our contract was soon to come up for negotiation, we believed the course should include some material on the subject of collective bargaining. This subject was substituted for the conference on safety, because our own safety meetings were going on at the time and there would have been a duplication of material on that subject.

"These meetings were really eye openers. We differed with the leader of the conference on some points, and we differed among ourselves on some issues, but altogether it was a profitable experience for all of us. We felt it was a good idea for our group to go through the course before the foremen had a shot at it. And it made it easier for us to sell it to the foremen.

"Mark my word for it, Bill, unless the foremen are convinced that the program is good for *them*, you won't get very far. If the top people have gone through it first, the foremen are more ready to accept the idea. That's the best way to convince the people at the top that the educational program is sound, free from bias of any kind, and that, in the long run, it will pay for itself.

"Well, along about the second week in October of 1946, we started with two groups of foremen — twenty-two in one, twenty-five in the other. The first group met on Tuesday mornings, from 10 till noon. The other group met at 1:30 and adjourned at 3:30 the same day."

"Do you mean you pulled the foremen off the job to attend these meetings?" asked Bill.

"Oh, yes. We have a feeling around the plant that unless a fore-

man can leave his department for a couple of hours he isn't much of a foreman. Besides, we have sub-foremen who can take over in situations like that."

"I don't think we could do that," Bill declared, half to himself. "We don't really have assistants who are qualified to take over, and I have a hunch that the front office wouldn't consent to the foremen leaving their jobs for a couple of hours to attend such meetings."

"Of course, it doesn't make any difference to me, Bill," said Dan, "but I'm pretty sure that if you really wanted to organize a training program, you could find the time somehow. Perhaps your foremen could meet at night.

"There's another point, Bill," Dan went on. "You say you don't have any assistant foremen. Well, one of the best things that has come out of our training program is just along this line. We have discovered some of those potential leaders who can take over for their foremen in an emergency or, later on, when they retire. They want to get in on training, too, and we are going to start a pre-foreman training program in order to find more of our best people to back up the first line."

"Well, that's an idea. I'll keep it in mind," Bill said. "How long was the course on Elements of Supervision?"

"Sixteen weeks," Dan said. "It was set up as a thirty-two hour course, and our foremen met once a week for two hours. When it was completed, we threw a little dinner party for the foremen with our executive people on hand. While there weren't any examinations given the men, records of attendance were kept along with some record of their participation and attitude. Everybody qualified for certificates except three men. Two of them had changed jobs, and one just lost interest and quit coming to the meetings."

"What do you think the men got out of it, Dan?"

"It's a little difficult to answer that question in a specific way, because I think the fellows got different values. One foreman may have found the most valuable thing he got was a better understanding of his own responsibilities and just how far his authority extended. Another may have learned how important it was to organize his department for more efficient performance. And so it goes. Every participant got something of value, but each man may have had a different idea of what was most helpful to him.

"But the company was thoroughly convinced that the course had been worth the time and money put into it. The foremen became more cooperative within their own group, and they worked better with the staff people. All of this seemed to result in a better feeling throughout the working force, although the change wasn't apparent immediately. It takes a little while for an intangible, like improved plant morale, to show clearly.

"The foremen really went for those classes in Job Evaluation," Dan continued. "The course outlined by the instructor was pretty tough, but they liked it. As the reclassification and rate changes proceeded in the plant, the foremen were in on it and understood what was going on. They were in a better position to make clear to the workers the whys and wherefores of the procedure, and we had relatively little kickback over installing the plan. As a matter of fact, almost everybody benefited from the changes, so there was really no ground for complaint. But, as you know, there are always a few who will oppose anything that's different from what it used to be.

"We've gone on in pretty much the same way ever since we started our program. We have one to three courses going on for eight months a year. We tried a course during the summer months last year, but it didn't work out too well. Vacations, muggy weather, and the usual summer interests cut down attendance. We've decided not to try that again. Training is the accepted thing around ABC now, and as long as it works out as well as it has, I think it will continue.

"I want to go back to this pre-foreman training program, Bill," said Dan. "We are just now working up a plan to have some of our promising young fellows enroll in our foremanship preparatory course. We want to promote a few of these men soon, and we'd like to give them a look-in on some of the responsibilities of leadership. We are going to be as careful as we can in our selection of people for this course, and we are going to make it clear that simply attending the course is no guarantee that they will be promoted. They will get assignments of various kinds, and while it is not customary to give examinations in the training programs for the supervisors, they are given in this preparatory course along with personal interviews and private conferences. The instructor will give management the benefit of his opinions as to each man's

performance in the course. The selection of any man for a higher job will, however, be entirely up to the plant officials."

"That sounds like a good thing," said Bill. "I don't know whether we're ready for anything like that yet, but I'm certainly going to try to get something along this line started at XYZ. Tell me about the cost of such training, Dan."

"Well, Bill, there are two ways of setting up a training program. You can assign someone in the organization, preferably someone with previous educational experience, to conduct a specific course or an entire program. He ought to be given time to do this part of the job, as well as to supervise or teach the courses once they are approved. Or you can do as ABC has found useful—bring in people from an educational organization to help you do the job. Either way, it is going to cost the company some money, but we feel that it is money well spent."

"Dan, there's another question I want to ask you," said Bill. "A couple of times you've mentioned your courses in collective bargaining or subjects like foreman-union relations. We've both had a union in our plants since the war. What you've said about general training, especially for foremen, seems all right the way you describe it. Most of the topics have to do with how people get on together on the job; how men learn to lead without driving; what some of the new technical tools of management are. These aren't matters concerning unions or collective bargaining. I don't think we'd quite dare at XYZ to get into this business of the union's part in production. Everyone seems a little jittery about how the union fellows will react to new management policies. Can't you give these general training programs for foremen and top management without getting into the union question?"

"Of course," said Dan. "You *can* do about anything you want to. But you and I know, just as we saw a while ago, that the foreman's job, as well as management's job, is often pretty vitally affected by the way a union acts—or reacts—to the foreman's attitudes and to front-office policies. The older ideas of direct management-worker relations are affected; sometimes we don't realize how much. Over at ABC, we think it's a good investment of time and effort to bring questions like this into conferences and other training programs. We believe that top management needs to take the union's interests and attitudes into account in planning its own

policies. And we know from experience that we'll have many less grievances and other hindrances to production if all our foremen learn to get along effectively with the union representatives. In a plant in which there isn't a union, there is, of course, no need to bring such questions as collective bargaining or foremen-union relations into a training program.

"But you at XYZ and we at ABC have had some practical experience with unions. We know that it's sounder, in the long run, to do business with them in a business way, to learn to get along with them rather than to fight them step by step. That has led us, Bill, to take a new step in our training program which I want to tell you about. We believe it is going to pay off in closer understanding between management and our workers and, consequently, fewer grievances and better plant morale. As an experiment, we've formed a group, in cooperation with the union, of ten shop stewards in one department for a course in Motion and Time Study."<sup>2</sup>

"How did that work out, Dan? I mean the union stewards' class."

"Well, you see it has just been finished, Bill, so we really don't know much about the outcome yet. The stewards were interested and stuck throughout the course. We believe it's going to have a favorable effect."

"Just one more thing I want to know, Dan. Where do you hold all these meetings?"

"We have a good-sized conference room on the third floor of our office building. We bought a few more comfortable chairs and a couple of long tables, and we made that room into as fine a meeting place as you'll see anywhere. One of the boys in the shop made a big blackboard and set it in a portable frame, and besides that, we have a form on which we can use large sheets of paper if we want to make any permanent records. We're building up a small library of books and other reading material which we keep in that room, and it's surprising to see how much the fellows use the place for reading and informal discussions. We're also encouraging the men to use the public library in town. Of course, they are permitted to smoke, even during the meetings, so there is an atmosphere of congeniality and informality at all times."

"Well, Dan, I guess Pete wishes we'd get out of here. We're



about the last ones to leave," Bill said as he stood up. "I certainly appreciate your taking the time to go over all that information about supervisory training. It's certainly interesting, and I'm going to talk with some of the boys 'upstairs' the first chance I get. We ought to be doing better at XYZ, and if what you say about supervisory training is true, it should certainly help us. Perhaps you and I could have lunch with the boss one of these days. You can give him the story better than I can."

"I'd be glad to, Bill. There's nothing I like to talk about more than training. You make the arrangements, and I'll be on hand."

Bill Davis and Dan Summers were both interested in improving the performance of their first-line supervisors. Both realized that supervisors all the way up from the "first line" to top management need to be constantly aware of the problems of foremanship.

## **So You Want to Develop Supervisory Training**

It was as if Dan Summers had said it.

"So you want to try some supervisory training, Bill?"

And Dan tried to give Bill Davis the story of supervisory training at the ABC Company. It was a typical story. It was the story of hundreds of small industrial enterprises, the kind that make up the bulk of American industry. Since most of them were too small to afford a training department staffed by specialists, training was neglected or postponed.

These smaller organizations, however, have fundamentally the same kinds of training needs as larger industrial concerns. Many of them need assistance in the solution of their training problems—the kind of assistance that they are often unable to supply alone.

Dan Summers, plant manager of the ABC Company, could not be expected, perhaps, to be fully informed about supervisory training. Had he been, he might have given Bill Davis a more detailed account of the subject.

He indicated that supervisory training was instituted at his plant to help fill a need for better job performance at the first line of supervision—the "point of impact" as he called it.

He could have said that this is a fairly general need throughout modern industry. A great many production problems, and certainly the bulk of the tensions which exist today at the worker

level, can be traced to faulty supervision. But these faults which cause difficulties at the "point of impact" are not always centered in the foreman alone. Some of the causes of inefficiency down the line can be traced to failures in adequate training and supervision at higher levels of management. A broader understanding of human motivation, emotions, interests, and attitudes have, in many cases, eased many of the tensions which arise in management-worker or management-union relations. Any program of training, therefore, which attempts to improve understanding of motivation and interests in human relations terms may well be carried all the way from the top to the bottom of any industrial or office organization. It may be noted, also, that when an attitude of indifference toward human relations exists in top management, supervisory training programs are likely to be ineffective. Unless top management is willing to devote the necessary time and attention to understanding human relations programs, training at the foreman level will not help much in improving in-plant attitudes.

Dan told Bill that a survey of any organization, in order to determine its training needs, was an essential step. The training needs of any plant or company can be determined with considerable accuracy through a joint study by the industry itself and training specialists. The training program can thus be shaped to meet these needs and be developed to fill these requirements most satisfactorily.

As Dan Summers pointed out, it is of the utmost importance that all parties concerned with a training program be willing to give training an honest trial. Dan used the expression "sold." Both top management and the foremen must be ready to work out — and work at — a training program for themselves. To achieve this acceptance, a number of preliminary planning meetings may be necessary to insure complete understanding all around. It must be made clear that the position and authority of foremen or of anybody else in the organization will not be jeopardized by the program. The process from beginning to end must be democratic; a genuine spirit of cooperation must prevail if training is to have positive results.

Supervisory training has been treated here as if it were designed to meet the needs of one individual industry, and the participants in the training program were entirely from one plant. It

may be noted that many industries, too small to develop their own individual training organization, have combined in a joint training program and have made up a conference group. In such instances, surveys of the industries involved can be made, and a common program can be worked out. Courses thus set up are somewhat more general in subject material, but they can be conducted as effectively as those set up for a particular industry.

## Variations in Training Methods

Another item of interest which Dan might have related to Bill was the way the actual training conference can sometimes be turned into a sort of proving-ground for certain supervisory skills and techniques. He could have told how the instructor at one of the ABC company's conferences had a foreman demonstrate how to instruct a new employee (the role being taken by another foreman) on how to make out a job ticket. There was a good bit of fun over the "errors of omission" in the procedure, but the demonstration was directly instructive and decidedly more effective than if the instructor had just told the group what to do. The method is known as "role playing," and it is being widely employed in supervisory training conferences at the present time. Although it is not an entirely new method of training, role playing has come to be used widely in many programs. Individuals in the training group play out or act out certain situations bearing on different aspects of human relationships. For example, one individual may represent the worker who has a grievance, another a foreman to whom the complaint is made, and still another takes the part of the shop steward. The roles may then be reversed; each role player must work out the situation in reverse. Others may be drawn into similar or varying situations, thus bringing the whole group into active participation in the roles or in evaluating the way in which other participants handled the questions raised by each situation.

The *conference* method is not the only approach to supervisory training, although it is frequently employed and, generally, most likely to produce the best results. Sometimes it is necessary to give some knowledge to a group, and the traditional *lecture* method may prove more satisfactory as a direct instructional device. There is usually little, if any, discussion by those attending the lectures.

It is doubtful whether any significant amount of learning takes place or whether there is much, if any, carry-over to the job itself. Lectures may, however, have general background value in linking all levels of management more closely around broad non-job aspects of the plant, the community, or the economy.

*Staff meetings* also may be used as training sessions. In many ways, the staff meeting is not the most suitable channel for training, but frequently important information is brought out in such sessions.

*Individual training* is another, probably the most widespread, training method in industry. Its principal purpose is to develop the individual supervisor's understanding of his job and his skill in carrying it out. Assuming that the personal instructor is competent, the relationship is, of course, the most directly effective training method. Unfortunately comparatively few people can do effective direct training unless they have been trained for this type of assignment. The method is also time-consuming and, therefore, comparatively expensive. It lacks the stimulating effect which personal interchange of ideas produces when people meet together in groups. Unless some effort is made, however, to incorporate those suggestions developed in conference into actual job performance, the very purpose of training may be lost. When such an effort is made under the direct observation and supervision of the more experienced senior, the maximum effects of training are likely to be achieved.

*Correspondence study* has its place in a training program. Although it has the advantage of allowing the individual to study at his own convenience, it requires considerable individual perseverance. And the stimulus of group meetings is not present; necessary explanations and interpretations are not possible because of the lack of individual contact with an instructor. If no other opportunities for self-improvement through training exist, correspondence study may prove useful. But most companies can provide more effective methods of supervisory training.

## **When Considering Training**

Training at any level in industry obviously requires adequate justification in terms of results. Evaluation is probably the most difficult aspect of any educational activity. The values of a training

program can be judged in fairly accurate terms if the criteria of measurement are sufficiently definite. Frequent appraisal of the training program is necessary if future educational efforts, as well as those currently in progress, are to be successful.

Some evaluation procedures may well be incorporated into the original training program, and as the training progresses these procedures can become a part of the whole program. It is not possible, or even useful, to build up elaborate statistical data on all phases of training results. It is possible, however, to determine from production records such things as quality improvement, accident reduction, the incidence of grievances, and labor turnover. Other more intangible training results, such as plant morale, can be measured over longer periods. Evaluation of supervisory training necessarily requires considerable time. As a rule, results cannot be observed immediately because long-run objectives cannot be measured by short-run criteria. This limitation needs to be taken into account even before training starts; otherwise training at first may appear not to be as effective a tool of management as it is potentially.

Even though an industry has a well-organized department training, it frequently happens that, for certain types of training, it will prove useful to call for some assistance from other organizations. Careful surveys to determine training needs will aid in preparing a training program. Preliminary meetings with prospective trainees to plan courses and to explain procedures will improve the chances of active and continued participation.

Supervisory training is not a cure-all for all the problems of production, but when developed with understanding and flexibility, it will aid in establishing a sounder base for plant morale. Its utility at all levels of management, as well as for the rank and file, is beyond question if the practical experience of thousands of plants across the country can be taken as evidence. Training is, indeed, one of the indispensable tools of modern management.

## Notes

1. Bruce V. Moore, J. E. Kennedy, and G. F. Castore, "The Status of Foremen in Industry," *Personnel* (1947), 23:250-255.

2. See *The Botany Plan* (Published by Botany Mills, Inc., Passaic, N. J., 1947), which describes and reports the results of a cooperative course in labor-management relations for Botany supervisors and shop chairmen and shop stewards.

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