THE ROLE OF THE INDUSTRIAL SUPERVISOR:
A STUDY OF PROGRESS AND CHANGE

An Honors Thesis (ID 499)

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INTRODUCTION

Supervision is one of the most prevalent occupations in the United States today with one in every eight persons employed in some type of supervisory capacity.\(^1\) Supervisors can be found in nearly every form of industry and service organization and at every level of the organizational hierarchy. Responsibilities of top- and middle-level managers vary considerably from those of the first-line supervisor who is the key person in executing management's policies and directives through face-to-face contact with blue-collar workers.

As an occupation, the job of the first-line supervisor has undergone many changes throughout its existence. The purpose of this paper is to explore in a comparative manner the changes which have occurred in the nature of the industrial supervisor's job since the early 1900's, and to investigate management style adaptations needed to cope with these changes. The second portion of this paper will discuss variations in the labor force due to the recent influx of women and minorities and the impact this has on the job of the supervisor. The factors of age in supervising the younger and older adult employees will also be explored.

SUPERVISION DEFINED

Supervision as a function can be defined in many ways. The overseeing of a process, worker, or workers during the execution or performance of a task is supervision.\(^2\) It can involve translating the broad, general directives, plans, and
policies of top management into specific instructions and
directions to be implemented on a face-to-face basis with the
employees. Supervision is also the function of leading,
coordinating, and directing the work of others to accomplish
designated objectives. It is getting work done through the
efforts of other people.

A supervisor is a member of an organization who accepts
a portion of the organization's authority as his own and uses
that authority to accomplish a part of the organization's
goals. He develops a collection of skills and utilizes them
to an acceptable degree to influence work-group behavior.
Supervisors are the most visible and directly accessible
representatives of an organization and its management. In short, 
supervisors are management representatives who direct the work
of operating employees.

HISTORY OF SUPERVISION

The position and status of the supervisor in American
industry has undergone many evolutionary changes since the
early 1900's. In the early twentieth century the shop foreman
possessed a great deal of power over the production processes
and the operating employees. As a direct representative of
top management, he was charged with the responsibility and the
authority to get the work accomplished with whatever methods he
knew. These methods were based on his own personal experience
with direct management-worker contact.

Foremen were typically blue-collar workers who were chosen
for a promotion due to their work expertise and company loyalty. They learned the job the hard way by rising through the ranks and displayed technical competence and an aggressive nature. Administrative and human relation skills were regarded as unimportant. The production work was relatively uncomplicated, and the foreman was close to those he supervised. The workers knew what was expected of them and had no doubts as to the result if they failed to produce. The foreman was strongly supported by top management and there was little union or government intervention.

The advent of Fredrick W. Taylor's philosophies of scientific management during later decades changed the concept of production. As industries grew, methods of work simplification were utilized to increase output. This growing trend toward functionalization affected the foreman by dividing and transferring his supreme authority and responsibilities to other newly-established departments.

The problems of employee dehumanization resulting from use of the assembly-line production technique prompted an interest by businesses in developing good human relations with their workers during the 1930's and early 1940's. The famous Hawthorne studies initiated the human relations era by proposing that people were motivated more by the satisfaction they received from fulfilling their needs for relationships with others than by the monetary compensation they received for their labor. Companies began developing innovations to permit employees to achieve need satisfaction at work by increasing social contact
and personal rewards. Foremen were expected by their superiors to concentrate on human relation and communication skills, leadership ability, and competency in personal relations.

During the 1940's other changes were taking place which also altered the foreman's position. Following the growth of unionization in this country and the passage of the Labor-Management Relations Act in 1947, foremen were excluded from the ranks of the blue-collar workers with regard to their rights to collective bargaining and were firmly classified as management members. Section 101, Subsection 2 (11) of the Taft-Hartley Act defined a supervisor as

any individual having authority, in the interest of the employer, to hire, transfer, suspend, layoff, recall, promote, discharge, assign, reward or discipline other employees, or responsibility to direct them, or to adjust their grievances, or effectively to recommend such action, if in connection with the foregoing the exercise of such authority is not of a merely routine or clerical nature, but requires the use of independent judgment.7

The Fair Labor Standards Act of 1938 considered employees to be supervisors if they spent no more than 20 percent of their time performing the same kind of work that their subordinates did, and if they were paid a salary with no compensation for overtime.8

Prior to World War II, supervisors in first-line management positions expected to remain in those jobs for the rest of their working careers. They viewed their responsibilities in terms of developing job skills in new employees and personally training the next generation of supervisors. They were considered to be natural-born leaders and it was believed that to be a
good foreman, a person must be born with strength of character, dominance, and other desirable personal characteristics.  

During the late 1940's and 1950's, the job of a foreman was regarded as the first step into higher management. First-line supervision became a training ground for young management hopefuls and less of a permanent career post. The trait theory of the "born" supervisor declined in popularity to be replaced by the concept that an effective supervisor can be trained to handle production responsibilities and achieve results.

Increasing consumer demand for products, an expanding labor force, and a rise in the general education level of people characterized the 1950's. The following decade brought equal opportunity demands upon industry by women and minority groups. Supervisors gained an awareness of the complexity of people and recognized their needs to be part of a social group and to achieve personal satisfaction. Under the open-system form of management, managers viewed the organization and its people as part of a larger, more complex environment.

Today the contingency style of management has gained acceptance and it is believed that no one style of leadership, organization, or arrangement of resources or personnel is best for all situations. Managers must react to the environment as technical and societal changes strike. Their jobs are complicated by rapid change in society, the workforce, and the job itself.

Mass media, greater mobility through improved transportation forms, and higher education levels of people have an impact on
on society as a whole. The composition of the work force has been altered through the influx of women and minorities. Job turnover rates are high due to the fact that 20 percent of all families move every year. People today are more conscious of the world around them, are better informed, and have higher aspirations, compared to workers a few years ago. Employees feel less dependent on their employer's organization and are more selective in what they will and will not do. A study by the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare reports on workers' wants.

What the workers want most, as more than 100 studies in the past twenty years show, is to become masters of their immediate environments and to feel that their work and they themselves are important—the twin ingredients of self-esteem. Workers recognize that some of the dirty jobs can be transformed only into the merely tolerable, but the most oppressive features of work are felt to be avoidable: constant supervision and coercion, lack of variety, monotony, meaningless tasks, and isolation. An increasing number of workers want more autonomy in tackling their tasks, greater opportunity for increasing their skills, rewards that are directly connected to the intrinsic aspects of work, and greater participation in the design of work and formulation of their tasks.

The nature of jobs performed in industry has been altered by the introduction of new processes and equipment and continued task specialization. Organizations have yielded to union and public pressure to modify hiring policies and training programs to promote upward mobility of its employees.

Management Today magazine outlines several environmental conditions anticipated during the 1980's. These include improved education standards at all levels in society, changes in the balance of power between unions and management, enhanced
expectations by employees for their working and private lives, and greater condemnation of firms which damage the environment. A breakdown in traditional values coupled with a loss of the Puritan work ethic are expected to yield a more violent society.

The impact of these changes on manufacturers will be great. Increased job mobility will produce a greater decline in employee loyalty to organizations. Workers will demand equal facilities with management as shop stewards exert greater power and influence on senior management members. Discipline will be poor and morale of first-line supervisors will be low.

The implications of these forces indicate that traditional patterns of management and supervision will not be adequate in the future. Organizational change is needed with modifications in management styles, redesigning of jobs, and more emphasis on the production worker as an individual. The industrial foreman will play a vital role in developing innovative supervisory techniques and patterns to deal with these future changes.

THE SUPERVISOR AND HIS JOB

The supervisor's job is the critical link in the management of an organization. Production supervisors are employed in all industries to direct the hourly employees in the manufacturing of goods. Their complex roles require the ability to understand many aspects of business and management. They frequently are responsible for seeing that millions of dollars worth of equipment, material, and manpower are properly and efficiently used. Industrial foremen commonly control three-fourths of a firm's
employees, expenses, capital investment, stock, and work-in-progress.\textsuperscript{16} Much of their time is spent resolving unexpected difficulties and emergencies are "normal."

Representing approximately 23 percent of all American workers, there are more people in the United States employed in manufacturing than in any other category of industry.\textsuperscript{17} Two-thirds of the manufacturing workforce is blue-collar. Nearly one-eighth of all employed persons serve in some type of supervisory capacity, and about 1,445,000 blue-collar worker supervisors were employed in the United States in 1976.\textsuperscript{18} Although they worked for almost all businesses and government agencies, over 50 percent were engaged in manufacturing with the remainder employed by construction firms, retail and wholesale trades, and public utilities.

During the 1980's, the demand for manufactured goods and the level of production are likely to rise to meet increased consumer spending through population growth and higher incomes. Demand for production workers, however, will probably rise at a slower rate due to enhanced applications of technology and automation. About two-thirds of the job openings in production will be to replace workers who leave through promotions, retirement, and other reasons.\textsuperscript{19} Craft workers will experience more job opportunities in the future, compared to the unskilled laborers.

Production foremen will continue to work in manufacturing although a large part of the increase in jobs will be due to expansion in the nonmanufacturing industries, especially in the
trade and service sectors. Competition for job openings will be keen as experienced supervisors retire, die, or transfer to other occupations.

Traditionally, the supervisor's primary responsibility is to see that the production process is carried out according to the goals set by the company's managers. The foreman is uniquely capable of directly affecting the organization's productivity (output per man-hour) through his relationship with operating employees, and can therefore influence production goals and the company's profits.

The responsibilities of the industrial foreman can be separated into six areas. His duties as a production manager involve requisitioning materials and supplies and expediting their flow. He must plan utilization of the plant's machines and equipment, schedule the flow of work, and assign workers to operations and jobs. He periodically checks the progress of his employees and aids in solving problems. The foreman is also required to maintain production records and meet production schedules.

The foreman's maintenance obligations include inspecting equipment and ordering repairs and maintaining a clean and orderly working environment. His responsibility for methods improvement involves devising new work procedures in coordination with specialist staff groups such as industrial engineering. The first-line supervisor is also expected to insure that quality standards are met by inspecting the manufactured product and cooperating with quality assurance personnel. In addition,
he must control and reduce costs, analyze the budget, and eliminate causes for variances in standard and budgeted costs with corrective action.

The most important aspect of a foreman's job is his relationship with his subordinates. As a manager, he interviews and makes decisions regarding prospective job candidates. He orients new employees to the plant environment and trains both new and old workers. He is expected to exhibit good human relation skills by counseling, coaching, motivating, disciplining, and appraising the blue-collar employees. Recommending pay increases, promotions, transfers, layoffs, and discharges; settling complaints and grievances; insuring safe working conditions and practices; and interpreting company policy to the workers and communicating employee sentiments to upper management are other elements of his job.

A 1970 study by researchers from Purdue University surveyed 4250 supervisors in Indiana firms to determine their most important job functions. The findings reveal that more emphasis is placed on interpersonal interactions with workers than on the traditional responsibilities of foremen such as cost control. See Table 1.21

In attempting to identify the actual demands on a supervisor's time, the challenge of meeting production standards still seems to be predominant. Chester Evans, professor at Wayne State University, has studied the percentages of time allocated to various job functions. The result of this and other studies confirms the fact that the two key responsibilities
of a foreman's job are people and production. See Table 2.22

Table 1 - Supervisory Responsibilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisory Functions</th>
<th>Performed By Supervisor (Percent)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employee direction and supervision</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Safety</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Production machinery surveillance</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality control and inspection</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Labor relations</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost and financial control</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 - Distribution of Supervisor's Time

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Supervisor's Activity</th>
<th>Approximate % of 8-hour day</th>
<th>Approximate No. of minutes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production supervision</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personnel administration and grievances</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern with machines and equipment</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appraising worker performance</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concern with materials</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Planning and scheduling work</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meetings and conferences</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
<td><strong>480 min.</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to his traditional tasks, the contemporary supervisor is also expected to successfully perform the basic managerial functions of planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling. Organizations today view their foreman as managers, compared to the past philosophy that foremen were simply blue-collar leaders.

As a planner, he is expected to set meaningful goals for
his subordinates and formulate a course of action to deal with both immediate and future problems. The foreman organizes by establishing relationships between the work to be completed and the people and resources available. He also makes decisions and delegates to his subordinates. Actuating involves motivating the workers by understanding and relating their needs to the organization's task goals. The supervisor is expected to be an effective leader and to communicate clearly with his subordinates and superiors. The function of controlling is observing when things are out of line and taking the necessary action to bring them back under control by measuring, restraining, or changing.

The role of the industrial supervisor is further complicated by the variety of people he serves. He must provide customers with the goods and services they need in the quality required and at a cost they will pay. He helps the organization by generating a profit and satisfies the employees by meeting their needs for equitable wages, good working conditions, and rewarding jobs. In addition to subordinates, the foreman is also responsible to his peers and superiors. Research by Professor Chester Evans indicates the amount of time a foreman spends with others. See Table 3.23

The first-line industrial foreman is in a unique organizational position because he is the only person who must work on a daily basis with managers above him and nonmanagement employees below him. Other supervisors only deal with white-collar workers, whereas the foreman handles the blue-collar
Table 3 - Supervisor's Time Spent With Others

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contacts</th>
<th>Percent of Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alone</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With subordinates</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With other foremen</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With superior</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With service and maintenance personnel</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With others</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

workers and their union. He serves as management's representative to the operating labor force and expresses the blue-collar workers' viewpoints to management. Because of his unique position, the foreman bears both upward and downward pressure from workers, unions, superiors, and staff management persons.

A survey by the American Management Society reports that in 1978 managers in the United States had average annual salaries of over $20,000. For the twenty key management positions studied, the annual salary range was from $16,000 to $27,700 with an average of $20,167. This represented a 6.7 percent increase over the 1977 average. Four of the top five salaries for the twenty positions listed belonged to persons employed in the manufacturing and processing areas of industry. According to this study, industrial plant managers commanded top salaries of $27,700 a year. General foremen could expect to receive $21,300 per year and first-line foremen were compensated for their work with an average annual salary of $17,900.
Salaries for foremen are often determined by the wages paid to the hourly employees with supervisors receiving 10 to 30 percent more than the highest paid blue-collar worker. Foremen may also benefit from overtime pay and night shift premiums. They generally work more than forty hours a week, because they are expected to be on the job before the workers arrive and after they leave. Working conditions may vary between plants and industries; some may be comfortable and clean while others are dirty, hot, or noisy.

A recent survey of over 300 supervisors published in Personnel Journal reveals that foremen place more importance on their work than on salary. Forty percent of the people surveyed said interesting work was their number one concern when looking for a job; pleasant working conditions ranked a low six out of ten. See Table 4.

Table 4 - What Supervisors Want From Their Jobs

1. Interesting work
2. Salary
3. Chance for promotion
4. Job security
5. Appreciation for work done
6. Good working conditions
7. Loyalty from supervisor
8. Feeling in on things
9. Tactful discipline
10. Help on personal problems

Traditionally, a line worker was promoted to a supervisory position in recognition for his contributions to the organization. Experience in production work was the primary job requirement. Men or women were seldom hired directly from educational institutions or training programs; however, today a growing number of employers are hiring trainees with college or technical
school backgrounds. This trend is most prevalent in businesses with highly technical production processes such as the chemical, oil, and electronic industries. Employers generally prefer job candidates with backgrounds in business administration, math, industrial relations, engineering, or science. Trainees usually undergo on-the-job training until they are qualified to accept supervisory responsibilities.

Employers today are looking for more than just production knowledge in their supervisors. In addition to experience, foremen must demonstrate leadership qualities, be able to motivate employees, maintain high morale, command respect, and get along well with people. Good human relation skills, which were unimportant in previous decades, are emphasized today along with administrative and personal skills.

In the past when the emphasis was on promoting shop people into supervisory capacities, only a minimal education was required. Knowing the production processes and understanding the concerns of the production workers were the most important considerations. Critics say hiring college graduates as foremen is detrimental, because they lack the first-hand production experience and may fail to understand the attitudes of the worker; however, with the rising education level of the general worker and the increased complexity of the foreman's job as a manager, college graduates are the ones today who are promoted to the higher management positions of general foreman, production manager, and plant manager.

In the past, industries have failed to attract and retain
educated people in the manufacturing field by stressing promotion of the hourly workers. Public attitude has been unfavorable to the field because of the lack of potential intellectual challenge, poor working conditions, and onerous industrial relations with unions. College graduates have displayed reluctance to enter manufacturing as a career because of the lack of social status in the job and the lack of clearly defined career patterns. 29

Today ever: hourly workers are hesitant to accept promotions to supervisory positions. They do not want to surrender the security of knowing a job and performing it well, and do not feel that the prestige of being part of management is worth the time, pressures, and responsibilities involved. Because of the high wages paid to union workers, sometimes employees must take a wage cut to accept a foreman's job. In addition, they do not want to lose the friendship or gain the envy or disfavor of their peers.

Foremen report achieving satisfaction from their jobs by working with people and making things happen by their presence. 30 They enjoy taking the time and patience to develop their subordinates. On the other hand, frustrations abound and often center around problems in communication. Foremen often feel a lack of support from management and bicker with the personnel department concerning applications of company policy. They must also deal with the temptations of favoritism and preferential treatment when relating with their subordinates.

Timothy Keaveny and John Jackson reported on an investigation
of supervisors' attitudes toward their jobs in a recent edition of *Human Resource Management* magazine. They found that 33 percent of blue-collar foremen below the age of 31 were interested in changing jobs. This figure was high compared to the 26 percent in the 31 to 40 age group; 18 percent in the 41 to 50 age group; and 22 percent of the foremen surveyed over the age of 50. This finding may support the viewpoint that manufacturing is not a desirable field for the young person entering a management career.

The National Management Association has determined several factors which contribute to failures in supervision. These include a lack of skill in performing management functions, character and personality defects, poor human relation skills, and improper attitudes where foremen fail to identify themselves with management. The ability to adjust to new and changing conditions is of critical importance in a supervisor's role, and many foremen fail in this area.

This changed role means that today's supervisors need a degree of intellectual capacity and verbal ability, to comprehend and discuss abstract matters, considerably above that which was sufficient for the old-style foreman, whose main requirement was confined to knowing his immediate job and getting the men under him to do theirs. This new role demands attitudes, maturity, and qualities of personality which were not essential in the old-type foreman, plus there is an increasing tendency to require higher standards of general and technical education and training. With the history of the development of the
foreman's job and a knowledge of the traditional and present-day responsibilities and duties of the foreman, it is possible to compare other aspects of the traditional and contemporary approaches to supervision.

TRADITIONAL VERSUS CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES TO SUPERVISION

Supervisory Management magazine states that "automation has changed the nature and scope of the supervisor's job. But it has not diluted its importance to overall management. He must handle human aspects of technological change and cope with union and employee resistance to job changes. The part of the supervisory job that is so difficult to learn is the part that deals with human problems." 34

Motivating employees to develop and engage in productive and personally fulfilling teamwork is one of the largest challenges facing supervisors. Human relations is an integral part of the supervisory function and is seldom overshadowed by technical expertness. Future advancements in technology will not replace the need for competency in this area. 35 Although a general background in technical areas is important, college-level courses in human relations are more essential to the future supervisor.

Foremen must be effective leaders to exercise good human relations. A person is a leader when he is able to communicate ideas to others so as to influence their behavior to reach some goal. 36 Technical, conceptual, and human skills are needed. Old-style foremen used a dictatorial method of leadership by
ruling with fear, threats, and coercion. Strong controls, close supervision, and rigidly defined tasks identified the popular autocratic style. In comparison, more foremen today are moving away from those dominating methods and are adopting democratic or empathetic modes of leadership concentrating on satisfying the needs of group members.

Methods of discipline have also changed over the years. The foreman of the early 1900's was the supreme power on the work floor and used strong disciplinary measures at his discretion to punish workers for unsatisfactory conduct. Contemporary management views the use of discipline as a way to correct undesirable behavior and prevent it from occurring in the future, and less as a tool for punishment of the individual. In addition, the absolute power of foremen in this decade has been curtailed by the establishment of five, common disciplinary steps: informal talks, oral reprimand, written notice, suspension, and discharge.

Much has been said and written about how and why people are motivated to perform on the job. Books expound upon Douglas McGregor's X and Y theory, Maslow's hierarchy of needs, and Herzberg's two-factor theory, but no one has really been able to solve the motivation dilemma. In past years, supervisors felt that if they paid their workers enough to make them happy, they would produce. The following table shows that many modern supervisors still do not know what their employees really want from their jobs. See Table 5.
Table 5 - What Workers Want From Their Jobs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employee Rating</th>
<th>Supervisor Rating</th>
<th>Item</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Appreciation of work well done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Feeling of being &quot;in on things&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Sympathetic help on personal problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>Job security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Good wages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Interesting work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Promotion and growth in company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Personal loyalty to employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Good working conditions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Tactful disciplining</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

"Work in America," a recently published report conducted by a special task force of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, reveals recent changes in employee work expectations. Workers today, as compared to those a few years ago, display less loyalty to an organization and are less dependent on an employer because of other wage earners in the family and available government support. They do not take pride in their workmanship; demonstrate less concern for quality, waste, and housekeeping; and are unresponsive to authority. Unionization has leveled out performance between and among job grades. People do not want overtime and write more grievances about the work environment. They are mature, sophisticated, educated, and more aware of their company, community, and society. Work is a smaller part of their lives and they want more control over their own destinies. These signs indicate increased difficulty for supervisors in motivating and meeting the desires of their employees.

Many of the human relations variables discussed so far
are directly influenced by the amount of authority demonstrated by the foreman. In 1945, Fritz Roethlisberger pointed to the erosion of the authority traditionally vested in the job of the production foreman, vertical erosion by shopfloor employees and union representatives and lateral encroachment by expanding specialist functions. This trend has continued and production supervisors are a vanishing breed.

Even sources of authority have altered in the past years. Rules and procedures, job title and position, name, age, years of experience, and methods of reward and punishment are seen as having a declining importance in exercising authority. There has been no change in authority obtained from technical knowledge or training, and more authority can be gained by two-way communication, information sharing and feedback, and group participation by the supervisor.

The effect of unionization on a supervisor's authority is especially disparaging. Foremen are bound by the labor contracts and must treat everyone alike. They are admitted only to the initial stages of industrial relations by dealing with the union shop stewards. Policy decisions are centralized by staff departments rather than being made individually by each foreman. The foreman is often bypassed by senior management and loses status when management relents and sides with the union on labor matters.

One of the most common complaints by production foremen is that they lack support from management. Management needs to change some of its assumptions about the job of the supervisor.
and his development. Good supervision needs a sound
costantional base, where the rationale behind the supervisory
skills and techniques taught or adhered to is understood by
everyone in the organization. Top management can help
industrial supervisors by encouraging their development with
money and time, communicating objectives, creating a stimulating
organizational environment, and rewarding individual growth. The development of good supervisors is a sound investment,
because increased organizational effectiveness and productivity
can yield high returns.

Supervisors must learn to cope with many changes, such
as the dying work ethic, effects of computerization, cost
constraints, and the changing workforce, if they are to be
effective in the twenty-first century. The second part of
this paper will deal with the new workforce in industry.
Topics for discussion are the effects of the influx of women,
minorities, and younger and older adult employees on the
supervisory styles of foremen. The management techniques
of women and black supervisors will also be compared with
those used by the traditional, white males.

WOMEN IN THE LABOR FORCE

Women constitute 51 percent of the population in the
United States but only 40 percent of the labor force. There
are currently 39 million women working, representing one-half
of all females. Fifty percent of all working women can be
found in just twenty-one occupations, while over a quarter of
them have one of only five occupations (secretary, retail sales, household worker, bookkeeper, elementary school teacher). In contrast, the Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that only one in seven male workers is employed in the largest five occupations, and half are spread among 65 occupations. Just over five percent of working women occupy management or administrative jobs, and men outnumber women 600 to 1 at the executive level.

Despite these dismal statistics, working women in America have achieved great success when compared to their status in the labor force in the early 1900's. White-collar employment of women increased from 28.2 percent before World War I to 45 percent by 1940. Women rarely earned more than 50 to 60 percent of what a man was paid for the same job due to the prevalent, but faulty assumption that women only worked for "pin money." The United States Women's Bureau has studies which show that, in actuality, at least 90 percent of those working women were supporting themselves and their families.

World War II marked a significant turning point in the work history for American women. By the end of the war, women were employed in operative, professional, and executive jobs and constituted 36 percent of the total civilian work force. During the 1950's, employment of women increased four times faster than employment of men. By the mid 1970's, 45 percent of all women over the age of 16 were employed.

The proportion of married women in the labor force increased from 15 percent in 1940 to 30 percent in 1960 to
40 percent in 1970. During the 1960's and early 1970's, however, the greatest increase in the female labor force took place among younger women. The 20 to 24 age group rose from 50 percent in 1964 to 61 percent in 1973; and the 25 to 35 age group increased from 37 percent to 50 percent.49

The influx of women into the labor force has been spurred by many factors. Technology has produced jobs in new areas such as data processing, and has also lessened the physical strength requirements for many tasks. A boom in the service sector of the economy has created jobs where mental and other skills are more important than physical strength.

Women are also better educated today with more females (74.3%) than males (68.2%) completing high school and one in six graduating from college.50 Attitudes are more liberal regarding women combining a family, career, and marriage. Rising living costs have forced many women into the labor force and in 1976 almost half of all families had more than one source of income. The U.S. Department of Labor predicts that 75 percent of all women aged 25 to 54 will work outside the home within the next twenty years.51 Statisticians predict a future labor shortage among managers, professionals, technicians, and skilled workers ages 35 to 45. Women will provide a fresh, untapped resource to fill these vacancies.

Probably the most influential factor affecting the women's movement has been legislative support with the passage of the Equal Pay Act, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, and Executive Order Number 11246. Firms are now legally
pressed to hire and promote women into jobs which have been traditionally reserved for men. Under the present guidelines, the U.S. Department of Labor can demand (1) equal opportunity in hiring and placement; (2) recruitment of women for all jobs at all levels, skills, and pay rates; (3) equality of opportunity in transfers, promotions, upgrading, and protection from layoffs; (4) equality of opportunity for training; (5) equal application of seniority and retirement policies; (6) special protection of women who need maternity leave.52

Over the last twenty years, nearly 17 million women entered the work force, compared to less than 12 million men. In the past ten years, the number of working women rose 42.3 percent, compared with a 16.8 percent increase of men.53 In 1976, women held two of every five jobs in the United States. If this trend continues, there could be an equal number of men and women in the labor force by the year 2000.

Major differences between the female and male segments of the work force can be seen in terms of the industries in which they work. On the whole, women are more likely to be found in service industries (40.9 percent of working women in 1973) than are men (18.2 percent) and are less likely to be found in mining and construction (1.2 percent versus 11.2 percent) or in manufacturing (19.4 percent versus 30.3 percent) than are men.54 Overall, the industries in which women are concentrated are those in which the average pay is relatively low.

Allan King has proposed and tested a hypothesis related to these statistics.55 He argues that women must schedule their
market work activities around their responsibilities for child caring and family duties, and therefore look for work in industries offering great variability in hours. Capital intensive industries must be operated around the clock because down-time on capital equipment is costly, whereas major costs in the service sector are due to labor. Because the labor intensive service sector offers a greater variability in hours, it attracts the female worker and directly affects her labor market participation.

Between the years 1900 and 1970, the labor force participation rates of women have increased from 20 to 40 percent. A major cause of this increase has been the influx of working women with children. Participation rates for women with children under the age of six rose over 150 percent from 1950 to 1972, while rates for women with children aged 6 to 17 increased more than 60 percent. 56

During the 1960's, the number of women in blue-collar jobs rose dramatically. Women constituted 3.1 percent of all craft workers in 1960 (277,000), but the number rose to 5 percent by 1970 (495,000). The number of women as general operatives rose from 28 to 30.5 percent in the same time period. Of all women workers, only one in seven holds a blue-collar job, compared to about half of men workers. The number of blue-collar jobs in the United States is expected to increase from 28 million in 1975 to 33.7 million by 1985. 57

Women in the skilled trades exhibit different characteristics when compared with other female workers. They are generally
several years older on the average than all employed women. As a group, they have a little less schooling and are more likely to be widows or divorcees. Nationally, about 9 of every 10 female skilled workers are white, which is the same proportion as among all women workers. About half of the married women in the skilled trades are wives of blue-collar workers. 58

Contrary to popular opinion, many women work because they have to. Sixty-seven percent of working women are single, divorced, widowed, separated, or have husbands earning less than $10,000 a year. 59 One in eight families in the United States is headed by a woman.

With support from legislation, many women are entering traditional male jobs to take advantage of the higher wages, independence, adventure, and job security from developing marketable skills. Employers, spurred by regulations from the Labor Department, are actively recruiting, training, and employing women for the skilled trades which pay twice as much as a traditional, woman's white-collar job. However, blue-collar male workers still earn as much as 40 to 100 percent more than their female counterparts even in unionized industries.

This great influx of women into the labor force, particularly into blue-collar jobs and the skilled trades, has major implications for the industrial foreman. Accustomed to supervising men, he will now need to adjust his style of supervision to encompass and satisfy the needs of women in his work force. A few preliminary studies of the differences between
working men and women have appeared, and the results are surprising.

It is assumed by most employers that females have higher absentee rates than men; however, an investigation by the U.S. Department of Labor shows that women lose an average of 5.2 days a year due to illness or injury compared to 5.1 days lost by men. The absentee rate for single women is significantly lower than the rate for men. Another assumption which has not been verified by studies is that women have more on-the-job accidents than men. Recent reports reveal that this is not necessarily true.60

There are some noted differences, however, between male and female blue-collar employees. The average woman does not have the physical strength or lifting capacity of the average man, and demonstrates little knowledge of how to use her body correctly for lifting and carrying heavy objects. Women display an unfamiliarity with tools, may be more afraid of heights, and more ignorant of on-site dangers, when compared to men.61 The astute foreman should recognize these differences and allow for them when assigning jobs and appraising performance.

Present day foremen should also realize that women are not necessarily motivated by the same factors as men, and should adjust their styles accordingly. Women respond more positively to a clean and orderly work environment and may be more apt to display emotion. Because they react more strongly to discipline, they should be criticized or corrected with tact and courtesy. Women are often uncertain of their acceptance by male peers and superiors, and may experience verbal or physical
harrassment. A good supervisor should display open support for the women in his work force and treat everyone fairly.

A study by two professors found that women are more concerned with earnings than are men. This can be justified due to the fact that historically women have received lower wages for the same work and reported greater job dissatisfaction. Survey results show that twice as many men as women are concerned with the type of work they perform.

The fact that pay is more important to women may have special meaning for managers applying motivation techniques. If the expectancy theory is operable, an item is a motivator only if it is perceived as such by an employee. Women workers might not perceive motivators in the same way as men, and therefore might not respond as anticipated. Women should be aware that their attitudes regarding work may not be shared by their male counterparts, and men need to realize that their traditional value systems may not be supported by female workers.

_Supervision_ magazine outlines several suggestions for male foremen to follow when supervising the woman craftsman. They should respect her as a strong person and remember that she is probably under pressure both on the job and at home because of her unusual occupation. Even though she works in a "man's" job, she is still a woman and wishes to be treated as such. The foreman should anticipate special problems, such as issuing protective clothing required for the job but fitted only for large men, and should guard against unfavorable male attitudes from his subordinates. Women make excellent workers and with
proper training will advance even higher in the skilled trades.

**WOMEN IN SUPERVISION**

Not only are women entering the workforce as blue-collar workers and craftsmen, but they are also slowly advancing into the ranks of management as industrial foremen. The percentage of women employed as first-line supervisors of blue-collar workers is very small; however, women constitute 18.5 percent of all American managerial and technical personnel.64

Until recently it was difficult to determine the extent of progress of women in professional training due to a lack of detailed statistical reporting. From 1900 to 1960 the number of women trained in the elite professions was minimal. Only within the past few years have women enrolled in the traditionally male-dominated business fields, but the trend has accelerated. In 1965 women represented 40 percent of the enrollment in colleges and universities and 33 percent of graduate school enrollments. By 1975 the figures had increased to 45 percent and 43 percent respectively.65

The female enrollment in MBA programs in 1976 was 20 percent, compared to only 6 percent in 1972. In two fields, finance and industrial management, the enrollment of women was virtually nonexistent as recently as 1972, but by 1976 women accounted for 6 percent of the persons studying industrial management.66 Within the next five years, women will be an important professional resource for businesses and will be quantitatively equal to men in terms of percent of enrollment in higher educational institutions.
Women stepping into the role of a production supervisor will face many barriers and must break some of the traditional misconceptions about female managers. Male executives often falsely believe that women are too emotional to make rational decisions, have high absentee rates from work, and lack commitment to their jobs. They argue that women lack the necessary education and experience to be proficient managers, and that they do not work long enough to justify company-sponsored training. Old-style managers reason that women really do not want the added responsibility or monetary rewards associated with executive positions. Pay discrimination is still rampant even among men and women with equal levels of education and experience.

A few recent studies have been conducted to determine if there are differences between the supervisory styles of women and men. An article in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* states that women are often described by the sex role stereotype as considerate, humanitarian, and helpful; men are aggressive, forceful, and analytical. It can be surmised that women managers are expected to behave differently (supportive, dependent, considerate) than men who utilize a directive management style. The researchers hypothesized that the rated effectiveness of managers and the satisfaction of their subordinates would decrease to the extent that they adopted a management style inconsistent with the accepted stereotype.67

The results indicate that male supervisors are perceived more favorably regardless of the rater's sex. Most workers
prefer a friendly supervisory style over a directive style for both male or female foremen. Male subordinates perceived female supervisors who used directive, authoritarian styles as least effective, which is consistent with the stereotype of the docile-mannered female. These findings imply that female foremen will be perceived to be of lesser quality than males, and that women should adopt management styles that are consistent with the sexual composition of the work group.

Leadership behavior is another area where women may differ from men; however, in the three areas of leader behavior or style, job satisfaction, and job performance, studies show that women in leadership positions do not behave differently or engender different outcomes than men in similar positions. Contrary to popular belief, females do not have a significantly higher need for fostering good interpersonal relationships and are not significantly more task oriented than males.

Opinions of female bosses from their male subordinates vary widely. Many men like and respect their female superiors but still prefer male bosses. The most common complaints about women executives are that they are too hard-driving, single-minded, and expect super performance from subordinates because they themselves are super achievers. The qualities men desire most in female managers are superior ability and strength. To be effective, a woman must have an unqualified endorsement from top management preserving her authority and proving that
she is not simply a token. With management backing, a woman can be an outstanding industrial supervisor producing profits for the organization, strong leadership for subordinates, and personal fulfillment for herself.

MINORITIES IN THE LABOR FORCE

Women are not the only newcomers to the field of industrial management as both laborers and managers. Blacks and other racial minority groups are also appearing in increasing numbers in the labor force. Black employment rose 34 percent to 9.3 million between 1960 and 1970. Also during this time period the number of blacks in professional and technical fields increased by 131 percent (to 766,000), compared to total employment increases of 49 percent (to 11.1 million). By 1974 there were 10.3 million blacks in the American labor force.

This gain has been prompted by the Civil Rights movement and the passage of federal and state equal employment opportunity laws. The purpose of these laws is to ensure that prospective employees and job incumbents receive equitable treatment in recruitment, selection, and promotion processes. The major legislative influences on equal employment opportunity are Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the Equal Pay Act of 1963, and the fifth and fourteenth amendments to the federal constitution.

Affirmative action programs are stipulated by the government to provide compensatory treatment for women and minority group members to make up for past inequities in the job market. They state that the selection pool for any job must be open to
all interested candidates and that the methods used in selection be valid predictors of job performance. Although designed with good intentions, affirmative action rules have complicated the hiring and promotion processes, and many managers are confused by their application.

In theory, affirmative action changes only the demographic composition of the work force, but in practice it may change a supervisor's ability to maintain work-group effectiveness, base of authority, and work role. These programs can change the employment picture for an entire organization, particularly at the lower levels where the people have received little preparation for how to deal with the consequences. By the time new hiring and promotion policies reach the foremen, the logic behind the long-range goals and timetables has frequently been lost in the downward communication filtering process. First-line supervisors are left with fixed quotas determined by top management and the belief that the company is going to hire women and minorities preferentially before equally or better qualified white males.

Many supervisors are suspicious of affirmative action measures because they feel their authority is threatened. They do experience a loss of traditional authority and power in that they may not make the final decisions on who to hire from among a group of applicants for production work. Also the personnel department may overrule disciplinary decisions made by foremen in an attempt to protect minority employees. Work group effectiveness may decline when it is necessary for a
supervisor to devote extra time and energy to train new, less qualified hirees.

Group conflict can result from differential treatment to minority employees. Often different standards are used to evaluate women and minorities, compared to white men, so that they can be promoted to higher positions and allow the organization to meet government quotas. Employees and supervisors are disgruntled when top management advocates equality in policies, but practices preferential treatment.

In summary, supervisors often do not understand the full implications of an affirmative action program on their own work activity and work groups. They do not understand the boundaries of their own roles within the new staffing policies and lack proper training in conflict resolution and group maintenance functions to deal with the new issues. 74

BLACKS AS SUPERVISORS

There is little substantial evidence to support the theories proposing observable differences between attitudes and job performances of black and white workers. A few inconclusive studies have been made regarding differences in supervisory techniques of black versus white foremen in industries.

One study published in Personnel Psychology tested for differences in management techniques of black and white foremen in the areas of role conflict and discipline. The results indicated a paucity of differences between black and white supervisors' attitudes on alienation, authoritarianism,
organizational orientation, and role conflict resolution. 75

Other research comparing black and white leaders focuses on three major areas of importance: leader behavior, leader potential and job performance, and job attitudes and satisfaction. Under the subject of leader behavior, King and Bass studied the extent to which black and white foremen engage in different leader behaviors under similar circumstances and found that behavior is influenced by the ethnic configuration of the subordinates. 76 White supervisors tend to be more directive with predominately black subordinates than with white workers; they are more likely to undervalue the capabilities of the black man, to be interested in having black workers respect rather than like them, and to be concerned primarily with pleasing their superiors.

Black bosses with predominately black workers will be very concerned about how their subordinates feel about them and therefore will be less directive compared to white supervisors of blacks. Black foremen with white subordinates are more likely to engage in general rather than close supervision and to allow or encourage workers to initiate superior-subordinate interactions. With both predominately black or predominately white subordinates, black supervisors will use less directive management styles compared to white supervisors.

When blacks and whites comprise a mixed group of workers, the group will be low in cohesion and therefore will encourage directive behavior by supervisors, both black and white. When workers are ethnically homogeneous, cohesion will probably be
higher yielding more participative supervisory styles. An ethnic match between subordinates and leaders may be needed for high group cohesion to prevail.

Researchers Richards and Jaffe found in their study of leadership behavior that white subordinates of black leaders engage in behaviors which hinder the effectiveness of the leader; however, the greater the proportion of blacks in the work group the less destructiveness is displayed by the whites due to pressure from their black peers. Some evidence does exist which suggests that when black foremen adopt a close and punitive style of leadership with mixed black and white subordinates, the black workers are likely to be more vocal in opposing the leadership style while whites show dissatisfaction by reducing output.

There is little supported data regarding leader potential and job performance for blacks and whites. There is a tendency to use different bases for the performance evaluations of black leaders than for white leaders rating blacks more on their interpersonal performance than on task achievements.

As for job attitudes and satisfaction, the information on which to base conclusions concerning these areas for black versus white managers is meager. Generally, the evidence suggests a tendency for black leaders and professionals to be somewhat less satisfied with their jobs compared to their white counterparts. Job satisfaction for minorities may be linked in part to perceived supportiveness from superiors.

In summary, minority groups do play a significant role in
the labor force today. Federal and state legislation has eased their movement into industries, but not without some opposition and resentment from white workers and management. Blacks are just beginning to advance into supervisory positions and preliminary evidence comparing their leadership styles with those of white foremen are educational, but inconclusive.

SUPERVISING THE YOUNG ADULT

Not only must modern industrial supervisors deal with women and minority workers, they must also alter their styles of management to skillfully motivate and lead the younger and older adult employee. Each group of people possesses certain values and responds differently to supervisory behavior.

Youths in America, those under 25 years of age, represent a valuable labor resource for business organizations. Over 86 percent of the men and 67 percent of the women aged 20 to 24 are employed, with 57.2 percent of the men and 13.4 percent of the women engaged in blue-collar jobs. In comparison, 43.5 percent of the men and 15.2 percent of the women over age 25 are employed as blue-collar workers. Although the majority of youths hold jobs, the unemployment rate for 20 to 24 year olds in 1977 was 11 percent, more than double the rate for all persons over age 25.

Developing and maintaining high levels of motivation and productivity among younger employees requires understanding and utilization of different techniques than managers have typically used in the past. It is increasingly apparent that
young people cannot be supervised, motivated, or trained in
traditional ways without creating substantial difficulties
for both the organization and themselves. Organizations
report a growing number of problems with managing young
employees, including a 50 percent turnover rate after one
year of work; a divisive generation gap between young workers
and older managers; a loss of creativity, innovativeness, and
energy after a few years of employment; naivete and unrealistic
expectations. 82

There seem to be several traits which characterize the
young employee and affect his work attitude and expectations.
He exhibits greater mobility yielding higher turnover rates
because of fewer financial commitments and family obligations.
His attitudes and values cause him to expect more from an
organization than the older employee. He may foster an
unfavorable opinion of big business and will be less tolerant
of perceived faulty or meaningless managerial practices. The
younger employee asks "why?" instead of obediently following
all orders from superiors. He expresses less loyalty to a
company and more to his chosen profession than his older counter-
part.

A youth may be slower in making a commitment with a business
organization because she is looking for the right job and
company and will not be satisfied with the first position
offered. Once accepting a job, she may possess an unrealistically
optimistic idea of what she can immediately contribute to a
firm in terms of skills and abilities. 83
Young adults display an inclination to seek satisfaction of higher order needs on the job, such as the psychological and self-fulfillment needs. Money is not always the incentive it used to be. They also desire to participate in decisions which affect their jobs and working conditions. In general, they are less satisfied with many elements of their jobs as compared to older adults.

An effective manager must have insight into the differences between groups of employees and adjust his behavior accordingly. A failure to do this will result in a lowering of organizational effectiveness through reduced employee efficiency; lower productivity; higher absenteeism and turnover; reductions in creativity; increased superior-subordinate conflict, tension and miscommunication; and further erosion of the employee-employer relationship.

Scanlan suggests several guidelines for supervisors when dealing with younger employees. Foremen can motivate young adults by providing interesting work, advancement opportunities, recognition, and a sense of job importance. A clearly understood wage system, good physical surroundings, job security, and opportunities for socialization contribute to a sense of job satisfaction. Young people appreciate the employer who spends time with them in training, but criticism and discipline should be tactfully administered to prevent defensive employee behavior. The most critical element in good superior-subordinate relationships with young people is communication including knowledge of what is expected on the job, feedback on performance, assistance,
and support. With these guidelines in mind, foremen should be able to develop positive interactions with young, adult employees.

SUPERVISING THE OLDER ADULT EMPLOYEE

Providing effective leadership and motivation to older adult employees poses even more of a challenge to industrial foremen than dealing with young workers. In 1976, 32.1 million people aged 45 to 64 were employed in the United States accounting for 42 percent of the labor force. Among blue-collar workers, 61 percent of employees over age 50 were holding skilled jobs compared to 39 percent unskilled.

The older worker is important to industry because of his many outstanding assets. He possesses maturity, good judgment, and skill at his job due to many years of work experience. He is more stable than young workers, has fewer work-related accidents, and a better attendance record. He is oriented toward work and displays loyalty to his employer and supervisors.

There are also several drawbacks to employing an older worker. He may suffer from physical limitations such as poor health or bad eyesight. He may be slower, weaker, and less resilient than the younger employee. In addition, he probably is not willing to learn new jobs or change his ways of doing things due to a lack of motivation.

Successful supervisors must learn to deal with the attitudes of older employees because they currently represent such a large portion of the labor market and will continue to be valuable resources in the future. The Age Discrimination in
Employment Act forbids discrimination against workers aged 40 to 64 in such procedures as hiring, firing, promoting, paying, assigning, or eligibility for union membership. With the recent removal of mandated retirement at age 65, older employees will have more opportunity to remain active on the job.

Foremen will need sharp motivation skills to persuade the older worker to adapt to new procedures and other changes in the work environment. Older adults have the most trouble learning a new skill when that skill conflicts with one they have already learned. They need ample opportunity to practice new methods and want to know how well they are performing. Supervisors should emphasize behavior reinforcement when teaching new skills to older workers.

Because of their extensive work experience, older workers should not be shunted aside by foremen but kept involved in the activities of the department. They appreciate individual recognition and can function as knowledgeable consultants on job matters. They are accustomed to traditionally high work standards and strict discipline and value good performance and efficiency. If treated with respect and patience, the older worker can remain a valuable employee for the organization.

CONCLUSION

The role of the first-line supervisor is of critical importance in industrial organizations in the United States today. From its inception with the advent of the industrial revolution, the foreman’s role has changed dramatically.
The foreman of the 1900's was the supreme authority over the production processes and the operating employees and ruled in a strict, authoritarian manner. Throughout the decades the foreman's authority has been usurped by staff specialists and unions and his management styles have mellowed into the empathetic pattern. Nevertheless, the production supervisor is still a viable force in the organizational hierarchy with duties and responsibilities of substantial magnitude.

The changes in the labor force by the recent influx of women and minorities has caused managers to question the effectiveness of their traditional management philosophies. Women and blacks both constitute an increasing percentage of the blue-collar labor force and are just now moving into the management ranks. Comparative studies have shown little substantial difference between supervisory abilities of women and blacks versus white males. Successful supervisors must also adjust to the special needs of the younger and older adult employees to keep them productive on the job.

The role of the industrial foreman has changed in the past 100 years and will continue to do so in the future. Supervisors who can accept technological advances and adapt to the new labor force will continue to grow and proper as they face the challenges of the future.
FOOTNOTES


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