

Supervision: Developing and Directing People on Mission

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Summary by Mark R. Elliott*

For the relationship among missionaries to have a synergistic effect, there must be mutual respect, accountability to one another, and also accountability to the organization or sponsoring body.

. . . supervision is effective only when it is implemented within a team concept.

--Jerry Rankin in the foreword to the book

PREFACE

A new awareness of the importance of working together has developed in the past three decades. The importance of leadership, total quality management, and the team approach have influenced business. A renewed emphasis on the priesthood of the believer has stimulated lay ministry among southern Baptists. These factors have stimulated mission agencies to examine how supervision could be done within the context of the Free Church tradition. (vii)

CHAPTER 2

Personhood and tasks are the two poles around which the material in this book will move. (6)

My definition of supervision is, 'The development of support systems for the enrichment of personhood and to assist in the performance of tasks.' (7)

Mentor shares, with the word supervisor, the implication of an over/under relationship. The word supervisor implies an administrative relationship and the word mentor implies a learning relationship. (10)

Models of Supervisors

Family—This style of supervision covers both personhood and task.

Industry—This type of supervision is task oriented.

Business—Traditionally the business supervisor does not get involved with personhood issues. However, the corporate world has begun to realize that the development of personnel is a good investment for them.

Military—the distinctive element about the military supervisor is the command system that focuses on tasks.

Craft—The major role of the master craftsman was mentor, teaching the apprentice how to do the craft.

Penal—The guard's supervision style is to use whatever force is necessary to maintain the discipline of the prisoners.

Orchestra—The conductor’s responsibility is to get the members of the orchestra to give his interpretation of a piece of music through the playing of their instruments.

Marriage—They are not interested only in tasks but one another’s welfare.

CHAPTER 3

Art is doing things intuitively. . . Science uses specific, disciplined steps. (16)

CHAPTER 4

Every system requires accountability. Without it, the system lacks integrity and is unlikely to fulfill its mission. (27)

Fred Pryor says, “The only thing worse than finding out what somebody thinks about you is not finding out.” 30

Supervisors and mission personnel perhaps can determine whether poor skills are the cause in order to remedy the situation. On the other hand, personhood issues may cause poor performance. (31)

One evaluation method involves a journal that reviews the significant performance and accomplishments. . . Another method is the narrative report, an in-depth written evaluation in narrative form that reflects the supervisor’s assessment of work, growth, and relationships. (32)

Issues of personhood are usually the most threatening and nebulous, but they are closer to where the person really lives. (33)

Related issues that a supervisor may use in grid evaluations are: Work, Authority, Initiating, Sex roles, Theological Reflection, Investment Awareness, Power Structures, Personal Structure, Agendas, Covenants, Conflict, Transitions, Loss, Discipline, Anxiety, Self-identity, Ministry Identity, Affirmation, Resistance, Defenses, Personal Strengths, Definition of Issues, Ability to Focus, Functioning in Nonstructured Situations, Functioning at Different Levels, Religious Language, Intellectualizing, Spiritualizing, Spiritual Formation, Perception of Reality, Internalized Direction, Risk Responding to Failure, Revealing of Self, Awareness of Ministry Contexts, Integration of Theory and Practice, and Personal Relating. (34-40)

CHAPTER 5

Styles of Supervision:

- ◆ Direct—supervisors using this style make decisions and expect compliance.
- ◆ Shared—suggests that there is more than one supervisor involved in the supervision process.
- ◆ Tacit—involves the denial of a supervision role by a supervisor who, nevertheless, exercises supervision.

Methods of Supervision:

- ◆ Supervision by Administration—through administrative procedures.
- ◆ Reward Supervision—the old carrot-and-stick approach.
- ◆ Supportive Supervision—the focus is supporting the mission personnel systemically and personally.

Stages of Supervision:

- ◆ The Initiating Stage—The supervisor who remembers the axiom, “Structure binds anxiety,” can face the new supervision role with confidence. Intimacy not earned creates barriers. When mission personnel see both commonalities and differences between themselves and their supervisor, it helps them identify with the experiences and struggles of the supervisor. Supervisors can help by pointing out the “land mines” located in the informal structures. A ritual at the beginning of a new supervision relationship provides the first step toward becoming a team.
- ◆ The Structural or Task Stage—The axiom applicable to this stage is: “Move from high structure to lower structure.”
- ◆ The Termination Stage—It is axiomatic that we begin to die the moment we are born. Termination rites are as important as initiation rites.

States of Supervision—The states of supervision describe the quality of the working relationship between the supervisor and mission personnel.

- ◆ The Structure State—This state has high structure characterized by the supervisor outlining responsibilities, resources, and methods.
- ◆ The Cooperation State—The supervisor changes from “telling” to “asking” in the cooperation state. The missionary is ready to take more direct responsibility.
- ◆ The Fellowship State—This state is person-oriented with a tendency toward intimacy, and intimacy can be threatening.
- ◆ The Partnership State—This means that the missionary has a voice in decisions and greater ownership of plans and actions. Sometimes supervisors in the fellowship state fear moving into the partnership state because they must give away some control

Systems and Supervision—A system is a person, persons or entity needs, goals, boundaries and understandings. A corporate entity is a system consisting perhaps of officers such as board of directors, president, vice president, treasurer, several managers, laborers, properties and traditions. A person is a system formed by diverse experiences, a unique history, and several goals and is thus subject to many demands.

A supervisor who is not effective in recognizing systems will likely destruct by crashing into systems instead of finding ways to use them.

- ◆ System Boundaries
- ◆ System needs
- ◆ System goals
- ◆ Systems’ Self-understanding
- ◆ System Accountability

- ◆ Systems' Development
- ◆ The Inter-relatedness of systems
- ◆ Imperfect Systems
- ◆ Systems and Symbiotic Relationships
- ◆ Inadequate Systems
- ◆ Changing systems—each time changes are made, people become more energetic. However, if changes happen in an atmosphere of mistrust, the opposite can happen and new energy can become resentment. . . Persons wanting to make changes in systems will learn that they have to pay the price for change.

CHAPTER 6

Methods of Supervision—two of these methods for supervision are developing the covenant and conducting supervisory conferences.

Covenants are instruments to guide and clarify relationships, roles and responsibilities between persons. . . The job description and covenant are two separate items. The job description delineates the responsibilities of a position. The covenant sets goals that will fulfill the job description.

Questions about the Covenant—Before the supervisor and the mission personnel begin to develop the covenant, there are questions they should ask:

- ◆ What do the systems require?
- ◆ What are the goals?
- ◆ What are the strengths of the mission personnel?
- ◆ What are available resources?
- ◆ What procedures will be followed?
- ◆ What is the process of re-negotiation?
- ◆ What is the evaluation process?
- ◆ What about approval?

The Process of Covenant Making

1. Determine expectations and needs.
2. Determine the goal—specific, measurable, practical, and attainable.
3. Plan the actions.
4. Develop an evaluation system.

Conducting the Supervisory Conference—The supervisory conference is the supervisor's time with one person where they can deal with that one person's task progress and personhood issues.

Times of Supervisory Conferences:

1. Routine supervisory conferences.
2. Occasional supervisory conferences.
3. Seasonal supervisory conferences.
4. Project supervisory conferences.
5. Crisis supervisory conferences.

The Structure of the Supervisory Conference

1. Pre-conference preparation.
2. The supervisory conference—A good ministry journal contains several sections: 1) daily plans 2) the day in 15 minute segments 3) summary or reflection about the day.
3. The post-supervisory conference work—A written account of the supervisory conference should include three categories: facts, feelings, and future.

CHAPTER 7

Since the greatest supervision tool is the personhood of the supervisor, it is important for the supervisor to feel okay about himself. Unhealthy supervisors are likely to create unhealthy people around them.

The supervisor is a minister both to and with the missions personnel.

Ways to Examine Supervision Relations

1. Level of intimacy
2. Supervision of different types of people—The ideal is not for two people to be alike, but for them to work within creative tension.
3. Patterns of relationships in supervision.
 - ◆ Confrontation or open disagreement
 - ◆ Dependency
 - ◆ Intimidation
 - ◆ Rejection
 - ◆ Projection
 - ◆ Transference
 - ◆ Counter-transference

Games Supervisees Play

1. Supervisory split.
2. Let's you and him fight.
3. Wooden leg.
4. Look how hard I've tried.
5. Clown.
6. Kick me.
7. Stupid.
8. Why does this always happen to me?
9. Harried.
10. Psychiatry.
11. Uproar.
12. Spiritualizing.
13. Blemish.
14. If it weren't for you.
15. If I only had.
16. Corner.

17. Ain't it awful.

Games Supervisors Play—in addition to some of those listed above see Eric Berne's *Games People Play*

Development of Team Building

First stage is to "form." The people of the team get together for some express purpose.

Second stage is "storm." This happens when the people realize that they have different approaches to the same problem.

The third stage is "perform." The people compromise to accomplish the task.

CHAPTER 9—SUPERVISING VOLUNTEERS

The volunteer deserves a job description as much as a paid staff member. It not only adds dignity to the volunteer's work, but it also provides help in directing the volunteer and making sure the volunteer doesn't interfere with the work of others. . . Everyone needs to know the role, authority and responsibilities of the volunteer.

You need to recruit volunteers. It makes them feel wanted. Recruiting is more than putting a note in a bulletin requesting help.

CHAPTER 10

If supervision appears to be problem-free, either supervision is non-existent or mission personnel are not being fully challenged by the situation.

Whenever there is a change in supervision, the supervisor can expect anger. (110)

Mission personnel who have chosen a ministry on some frontier tend to be highly individualistic. While we applaud their individualism and independence, these characteristics can also hinder supervision. The supervision should help mission personnel recognize how the attributes of individualism or independence help, and conversely, when they do not. (111)

Supervision (i.e. support) may be especially needed where geographical distances are great. (115)

CHAPTER 11

Problems in Communication

- ◆ Listening
- ◆ Context
- ◆ Authority
- ◆ Setting

Meaningful Time Exercise (129f)

Taking Charge of Your Life and Job

- ◆ Life Goals
- ◆ Plan—good planning involves setting priorities.
- ◆ Schedule
- ◆ Develop Routine
- ◆ Do Your Job
- ◆ Multiple Uses
- ◆ Keep a Journal

Confrontation is to face, challenge and encounter. Conflict is to be antagonistic, incompatible, contradictory, and irreconcilable.

Why Do We Confront?

1. Care
2. Clarify
3. Change
4. Growth

Why Do We Avoid Confrontation? Proverbs 27:5 “Better is open rebuke than hidden love.”

1. It’s not nice or it’s not Christian.
2. Fear.
3. Passivity.

Who to Confront—healthy people who can change. Neurotics need care from therapists rather than confrontation from a supervisor.

Qualities of a Good Confronter

1. Caring
2. Insightful
3. Courage
4. Patience

How to Handle Conflict

1. Anticipate conflict
2. Develop good attitudes
3. Avoid dangers—If you pour oil on troubled waters rather than deal with the issue, the future storm will wash the oil away. You can gloss over differences, but it does not bring harmony.
4. Analyze
 - ◆ The nature of the conflict
 - ◆ The depth of the conflict
 - ◆ The dynamics of the conflict—the farther the conflict is from the leader, the less critical the conflict.
 - ◆ The term of the conflict—is it a chronic situation or recently developed
 - ◆ Cost of the conflict
 - ◆ Determine the conflict phase—1) Anticipation 2) Conscious but unexpressed differences 3) Discussion 4) Open dispute 5) Open conflict
5. Consider alternatives

6. Decide
7. Implement decisions
8. Care for people's needs

The Process for Good Delegation

1. Define goals
2. Authority
3. Communicate
4. Train
5. Initiate
6. Monitor
7. Provide
8. Evaluate

ACTIONS I NEED TO TAKE:

1. Read *Games People Play* by Eric Berne
2. Begin to develop formal covenant relationships with leaders.
3. Prayerfully set life goals in significant areas.
4. Begin to keep a journal.
5. Read David Augburger's book *Caring Enough to Confront*
6. Clarify job description for church starters and mission pastors.
7. Develop more structured approach to monthly meetings—pre-conference preparation specifically.

*Mark R. Elliott served as a Director of Missions (Associational Mission Strategist) in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska for almost three decades. He is a strong advocate for obedience and Biblically based disciple making. As such, he knows that making healthy disciples requires Christian leaders to be constantly pursuing spiritual maturity—be lifelong learners. Because of the time constraints of ministry, most pastors focus their reading list on resources that assist them in teaching and preaching the Word of God. As such, books focusing on church health, leadership development, and church growth tend to find their way to the bottom of the stack. With that reality in mind, Mark has written discussion summaries on several books that have helped him to personally grow in Christ and that tend to find themselves on the bottom of most pastor's stack. Many pastors have found them helpful as they are able to more quickly process great insights from other pastors and authors.