



Your Supervision Style

Overview and Purpose

As a student organization leader, you may also have the role of being a supervisor—overseeing meetings, programs, and other activities. Supervision is viewed as essentially a helping process, which is designed to support your members as they seek to promote the goals of their organization and to advance their leadership development. The concept of supervision envisions members of your organization and supervisors collaborating to accomplish the organization's goals and to help each member mature both as a person and a leader.

Activity

What is your supervision style? Rarely does someone's style reflect a "true" type as listed below, and may depend on the type of people you are supervising. However, it is helpful to know what style you use frequently, and to understand ways in which your style both helps and impedes your ability to be an effective leader.

- I. **Authoritarian supervision** is based on the belief that members require continuous attention because they are often undependable or immature—basically, because people will attempt to work as little as possible unless someone monitors them carefully. Because members cannot be trusted to fulfill their tasks, the supervisor must check on them frequently. The supervisor is ultimately responsible for members' performance. Consequently, close observation is an essential part of the supervisor's responsibilities.
- II. **Laissez Faire supervision** is based on the desire to allow members the freedom to use their talents and skills in accomplishing job responsibilities. This philosophy of practice is often articulated as, "Hire good people and then get out of their way." As a result, members view supervision as an admission to failure; that is, as something to submit to when they encounter a situation they are unable to handle on their own.
- III. **Companionable supervision** is based principally on a friendship-like relationship. Above all else, supervisors seek to be liked and to create harmonious relationships among members; they concentrate on being buddies with the staff they supervise and avoid confronting members about poor job performance or mistakes in judgment as long as possible.
- IV. **Synergistic supervision** is a cooperative effort between the supervisor and members that allows the effect of the joint effort to be greater than the sum of their individual contributions. Supervision in this approach has a dual focus: accomplishment of the organization's goal and support of the staff in the accomplishment of their personal and professional development goals. This approach to supervision emphasizes the identification of potential problems early; the supervisor and member then jointly develop strategies to prevent or ameliorate problem situations. Supervision is dedicated to assisting all members to enhance their knowledge and skills, which can lead to advancement within the organization and profession.

Read the following barriers to good supervision listed below and address how you, as an organization leader, will overcome these barriers. Then read the following tips on being a good supervisor. With practice and patience, you will be able to fine tune your leadership and supervision skills and be an even more effective leader of your organization!



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Possible Barriers to Good Supervision	How I Will Overcome These Barriers
1. Lack of communication	1.
2. Difficulties in confrontation	2.
3. Lack of trust	3.
4. Can't give/take criticism	4.
5. Close minded	5.
6. Inconsistent	6.
7. The need to be liked	7.
8. Being too critical	8.
9. Other	9.

A Good Supervisor:

✓ **Balances high productivity and morale**

As a peer supervisor, it is difficult to confront job performance at the risk of damaging the rapport and relationship established, but consistency will gain the respect of your staff. Take an interest in each member. Be supportive and sensitive to the whole picture and what is going on in that member's life.

✓ **Is consistent with modeling expectations**

Set a strong example for your members to follow (i.e.; be on time, actions and statements are consistent with your organization's mission and philosophy).

✓ **Clearly communicates his or her leadership and supervision style**

Also ask members what they need in a leader and supervisor.

✓ **Establishes clear goals for the members**

Review the goals mid-quarter to assess and implement changes.

✓ **Insists on frequent communication**

Your organization is a team, so when problems and disagreements come up, talk to the individual and talk about how it affects the group.

✓ **Manages positively**

Praise in public, criticize in private. Support your members in their learning curve, but do not do it all for them! Delegate (include a link to delegating tips here) and communicate (include a link to communication tips here)—this provides ownership by your members of the tasks at hand.

✓ **Insists on accountability**

No one is perfect, the job is a learning process, hold your members accountable and review their progress so that they can set and meet goals for improvement.