

Boot Camp for New (and lightly-trained) Supervisors Week 2, Day 1: Integrity and Fairness Are Crucial

For frontline employees, there are two crucial qualities for great supervisors and leaders. Consistently being fair is the first quality. Favoritism is one of the things that destroys the morale of a team. Even the appearance of favoritism can mess with the dynamics of a group or a team. Being fair beyond anyone's doubt can be a challenge, especially if the new supervisor was part of the group that he or she is now supervising. It is difficult to switch from being one of the group to being the supervisor of the group.

The transition can be especially painful if some of the members of the group are friends, people that we socialize with outside of work. As supervisors, we need to create a little bit of distance now. We must tell our friends that we cannot talk about situations at work or any of the other people on the team. Our friends cannot enjoy an access to us and our opinions about work that the rest of the team does not get. We absolutely, positively have to treat everyone the same.

A good rule of thumb is: Don't say anything to one person that you would not stand up and say in front of the entire group. We should ask ourselves, "Would I be comfortable saying this to everyone that I supervise?" If the answer is no, do not say it. The only exception is when we are talking to one person about his or her own performance issues.

It's also important for us to let the team know that we have established boundaries with our friends. Our employees will think the worst if we don't bring it up, so we need to go ahead and discuss the agreement that we have made with our friends. It's called being transparent, and it's a big piece of being a great supervisor. It's crucial that everyone on the team feels confident that when we and our friends are chatting, we aren't talking about the other people on the team or what's going on at work.

The second quality that is important to frontline employees is the ability to listen. One of the things that employees complain about most often is when supervisors don't stop what they are doing and listen. It's called Active Listening, and we will discuss it in depth later in the week. Basically, we want to listen for understanding.

The over-arching category that listening and being fair fall under is "acting with integrity." Integrity is being honest and fair. It's also doing what we say that we are going to do. Integrity is about being trustworthy and reliable. We get to put a bit of our own personality in the mix with authenticity which is another piece of integrity.

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Everyone's style is a little different. You're not going to talk to people the same way I do. You're not going to assign tasks or approach the job the same way I would. It's not that one is better than the other. It's that we are each doing it according to our own strengths and our own personalities. We're acting with authenticity.

In summary, there are certain qualities that great supervisors must cultivate in order to be effective. Two that have the most value for frontline employees are fairness and active listening. Great supervisors also act with integrity. They are trustworthy, reliable, authentic, and positive.