Learning Objectives

By the end of this chapter, you should be able to:

• Identify the requirements for making the transition from team member to first-line supervisor.
• List four reasons why first-line supervisors are important to an organization.
• Describe the paradoxes encountered by first-line supervisors.
• Explain what is meant by situational leadership.

When you are promoted to first-line supervisor, you become the boss. You may not be the “big boss” in charge of the whole organization, but you definitely have your own area of responsibility. Being the boss and being in charge brings with it many opportunities for success and failure. Now you’re the one who has to worry about things that don’t get done. Your responsibility goes beyond just putting in your time. You are responsible for results—your own results as well as those of your employees.

Dean Erskine looked around at his new workspace and began to think about what he was going to do now that he was in charge. He’d been waiting a long time for the opportunity. He felt he should have been promoted six months ago, when the boss picked LuAnne instead. He decided to give them another six months and, sure enough, just in the nick of time the company had finally seen the light or he would have been out the door. He would show them all now that they should have made the decision sooner. Today he would get his workspace organized, tomorrow he would begin changing the company.
Making the Transition to First-Line Supervisor

Dean seems confident that he is going to succeed as a supervisor. However, for many new supervisors this air of confidence is really used to mask genuine concern about themselves and their new responsibilities. First-line or first-time supervisors usually worry whether they have the qualities needed to be successful. For many, this is their first promotion, and they may have doubts about their ability to meet their new responsibilities and requirements. Take a few minutes to complete the following self-assessment to determine how prepared you are to make the transition to first-line supervisor.

Exercise 1: Making the Transition: A Self-Assessment

Instructions: Read each of the statements below. On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being “Not Confident” and 10 being “Very Confident”), circle the number that is nearest to your confidence level in making the transition from employee to first-line supervisor.

1. I can shift the focus from my area of technical or functional expertise to supervising other people.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. I can shift my focus from my job and my department to become aware of the entire organization and the role of individual departments and the relationships among departments.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. I can make the transition from being a doer to ensuring work gets done.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. I can handle multiple priorities at one time.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. I can shift my focus from the quality of my own performance to the quality and performance of the entire team.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. I can handle working the extra hours that may be required in my new role.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. I can make the transition from being an information receiver to being an information provider.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. I can make the transition from being concerned about my own personal satisfaction to a concern for motivating and developing my employees.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

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9. I can make the transition from being a team member to being a team builder.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. I can maintain a positive attitude when more demands are placed on me.
   1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Add the numbers you circled for the ten statements.

   Total Score: _____

Scoring
85-100: You are confident in your abilities and should be able to make a successful transition to first-line supervision.
70-85: You have some work to do as you make the transition.
Less than 70: Your score indicates that you are not sure about your ability to supervise others effectively. Use this course to provide yourself with the confidence to make a successful transition.

Exhibit 1–1 contrasts the issues listed in the self-assessment, showing what an employee does and what a supervisor does. Here’s a brief summary of what those differences mean to a first-line supervisor.

Focus
Good employees have the skills required to do their jobs in an effective and productive manner. Their focus each day is on using their specific technical

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**Exhibit 1–1**
Differences Between Employees and First-Line Supervisors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employees Must:</th>
<th>First-Line Supervisors Must:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Focus on their specific job skills</td>
<td>• Focus on supervising people</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Contribute to the department’s success</td>
<td>• Contribute to the entire organization’s success</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Do the work</td>
<td>• Ensure work gets done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work on specific priorities</td>
<td>• Be involved with multiple priorities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be most concerned about the quality of their own work</td>
<td>• Be concerned about the quality of the entire team’s work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Work a specified number of hours</td>
<td>• Be willing to work overtime and on a scheduled day off knowing there may not be any extra pay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Share information with others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Motivate and develop other employees</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Be an effective team builder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Maintain a positive attitude even when circumstances would make it easy to be negative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Receive information from others</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be personally motivated and satisfied</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be an effective team member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Have a good attitude, but can “get away” with having a bad attitude from time to time</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
skills—such as engineering, accounting, or advertising. As a first-line supervisor, on the other hand, you will no longer spend all of your time using your technical skills, but instead you will be devoting a portion of your time to supervising your employees. Depending on the organization and the number of people in your work group, you may spend anywhere from 15 percent to 35 percent of your time supervising (see Exhibit 1–2).

**Seeing the Big Picture**

First-line supervisors have to move out from their little corner of the world and begin to see the big picture. You have to go beyond thinking about what’s happening in your own department and begin to think about how your department’s work contributes to the entire organization’s success. In your new role, you will spend a considerable amount of time interacting with and learning to work with people from other parts of the organization.

**The Work**

Employees do the work and first-line supervisors ensure the work gets done. Although as a first-line supervisor you still have specific responsibilities of your own, you also assume responsibility for making sure your employees get their work done as well. To be effective you have to learn to split your time between doing your own specific tasks and following up on the work of your employees. Very often as a first-line supervisor you must function in both roles at the same time.

**Number of Priorities**

No matter how many priorities individual employees have, supervisors have responsibility for all the priorities of their employees. For example, say you have six people in your work group and each of them has four projects. You now have ultimate responsibility for twenty-four projects (6 times 4) plus any specific projects that you must complete by yourself. In other situations,
all your employees may have the same ten major responsibilities and your job is to ensure that they all meet their responsibilities. These additional responsibilities and their associated time commitments can be a big challenge as you become a first-line supervisor.

Work Quality
Many new first-line supervisors are promoted because they are good at their specific employee job requirements. They are the best cook, best salesperson, best riveter, best electrical engineer, or the best accountant. You probably were good at your technical or functional responsibilities. In your new supervisory role you may have to work with people who are not as skilled as you are. As frustrating as this can be at first, you must resist the temptation to do the work for your employees. In the long run, you will be successful when you get your employees to produce work that meets your quality standards.

Time Commitment
Some employees may think that if they could just get promoted to first-line supervisor, their lives would be a whole lot easier. They would have more control over their work and time. In reality, the opposite is usually true. First-line supervisors normally have more demands placed on them and their time. As a result, they may spend most of their regular hours supervising and find that they have to stay late or come in early to get their own work done.

Dealing with Information
Employees typically are on the receiving end of information. They get the information that their supervisors share with them. In contrast, as a first-line supervisor you often become the “gatekeeper” of information because you are between your employees and upper management. You have to decide what information you receive from upper management that you communicate to your employees. Since complaints about communication (or lack of) dot the landscape of many organizations, to be effective you must learn how to deal with the information that comes your way.

Motivation
Chances are you were promoted to be a first-line supervisor because you were viewed as being self-motivated. The ability to keep yourself motivated is a positive attribute. Once promoted, it becomes your responsibility to motivate others as well as yourself. As a new supervisor, you must learn what motivates your employees and then provide them with the opportunity to motivate themselves and keep yourself motivated at the same time.

Role on the Team
Effective team members are important to every organization. Those who make the best individual contributions are often tapped to move up to first-line supervisor. In their new roles, they are expected to build teams with a
variety of employees—not all of whom have the same degree of commitment that you have to do the best possible job. Transforming a group of individuals into a functional team presents its own set of challenges.

**Attitude**

Employees with positive attitudes are a plus in any organization. Those who can see the bright side of any situation can have a positive impact on those around them. New first-line supervisors normally assume their responsibilities with a positive attitude. As the realities of their new responsibilities become apparent, however, they become challenged to maintain the positive attitude they had when they were promoted. To be successful you have to learn to maintain a positive attitude—even during those times when you would rather vent your own frustrations—so your positive attitude rubs off on your employees.

**Exercise 2: Getting Ready to Make the Transition**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Now that you have read about the requirements for being a successful first-line supervisor, go back and review your score for each of the items on the self-assessment. Fill in your scores on the grid that follows. For each item where you had a score of seven or less, list what action you plan to take to improve your ability to make the transition to first-line supervisor. Sample responses are listed for each item.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Sample Action Required</th>
<th>Action Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Keep a time log for the first month to see how I’m spending my time.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeing the Big Picture</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Read the company’s strategic plan and review department objectives.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Work</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Avoid taking on responsibilities that employees should have.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Priorities</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Make sure the department workload is balanced among all employees.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Help people do quality work without expecting them to be perfect all the time.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time Commitment</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Be flexible and open to working extra hours when necessary.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with Information</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Make a concerted effort to keep my employees informed without doing data dumps.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Use regular positive feedback to motivate my employees.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Sample Action Required</th>
<th>Action Required</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Role on the Team</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Get employees working together so they feel part of a cohesive team.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Do my best not to bring home to work and vice versa.</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Importance of First-Line Supervision

As her department continued to grow, it became obvious to Denise that she needed to add a first-line supervisor in her records department. There were now fifteen clerks who needed more attention and assistance than she could provide. Plus, she was busy with the new projects that her boss, Kamel, had assigned her. She talked to him to get his perspective on the situation. After a couple of meetings he agreed with Denise and asked her to draw up a proposal for adding a first-line supervisor in the records department. Then they worked together to implement the change to make the whole department more productive.

Efficient and effective first-line supervision is one of the primary needs of practically every organization. In most cases, the ultimate execution of corporate plans and objectives comes down to the supervisory level and depends on the supervisor's skills and abilities. First-line supervisors are responsible for the results and performance that upper management needs for survival and growth. There are four reasons why first-line supervision is important:

1. Day-to-Day Operations
2. First Line of Contact for Employees
3. Span of Control
4. Development of Organization Talent

### Day-to-Day Operations

Whether an organization's primary activity is wholesale, retail, hospitality, service, manufacturing, nonprofit, or some other type, the responsibility for day-to-day operations falls to first-line supervisors. If a customer or client has a problem, the first management person he or she comes in contact with is the first-line supervisor. The level of service and the quality of the work produced each day depends on the employees and the direction they receive from you—their first-line supervisor. This is where the “rubber meets the road” and where customers or clients develop their perceptions of an organization. You are the one who has to make it happen customer-by-customer and task-by-task if the organization is going to be successful.

### First Line of Contact for Employees

If upper management wants to make a change in policy or procedure, first-line supervisors must introduce the change. If employees have questions about what the organization is doing, you need to know the answers or where to get them. The workforce’s impression of the organization and of upper manage-
ment is often a reflection of their impression of their first-line supervisor. Similarly, how employees treat customers or clients often reflects how the employees are treated by upper management. Thus, your actions as the first-line supervisor can have a significant impact on how customers and/or clients are treated and how they, in turn, perceive the organization.

Span of Control
First-line supervisors are needed to maintain an appropriate span of control. Although the span of control varies from organization to organization and from job to job, there is a point at which a person is needed to supervise either a certain number of employees or a certain number of tasks. When that point is reached, a first-line supervisor position is created. Even though there has been a trend in recent years to flatten organizations, most of the flattening has occurred at the middle management ranks. Effective first-line supervisors are always in demand in those organizations that want to maintain good customer and good employee relations.

Development of Organization Talent
First-line supervision is critical to the development of organization talent. In some cases, it is the first step up the management ladder. Success at the first level often leads to opportunities in middle management and perhaps ultimately to upper management. Organizations often use entry-level supervisory positions as “testing” grounds for those moving up in management. Though success at the first level may not necessarily translate into success higher up in the organization, failure at the first level is likely to mean failure at higher levels as well.

Even if you do not move up in the organization, the skills you develop as a first-line supervisor can help you maximize your own potential. Look at your new responsibilities as a development opportunity and take advantage of the situation to learn as much as you can about yourself and the organization. Demonstrate to those in upper management how you can have a positive impact when given even greater responsibilities. In the end, you will be a more valuable member of the organization regardless of your place in the hierarchy. This experience also gives you an advantage if you find yourself in a flatter organizational environment.

Exercise 3: Having a Positive Impact as a First-Line Supervisor

**Instructions:** Think about each of the four reasons why first-line supervision is important. Write down some specific things that you can do to have a positive impact as a first-line supervisor. Sample responses are listed for each item.

1. **Day-to-Day Operations**
   
   Make sure my interactions with customers are handled in a professional manner that reflects positively on the company.
2. First Line of Contact
*Treat employees the way I want them to treat our customers.*

3. Span of Control
*Be willing to handle a larger span of control if necessary.*

4. Development of Organization Talent
*Read at least one supervisory management book each month to improve my knowledge and skills.*

**Paradoxes of First-Line Supervision**

First-line supervisors face several paradoxes as they make the transition from being an employee to being in charge. Effective supervisors are aware of these paradoxes and are proactive in addressing them.

**Being a Supervisor and a Technical Expert**

The first paradox is that although you are now the supervisor of other people you are still expected to use your technical expertise. You have to find the right balance between supervising others and doing whatever technical work is still required of you. This can lead to frustration when you have trouble getting your own work done because of the supervisory issues that you have to address. It's not unusual for new supervisors to feel more at home doing the technical work than in performing their new supervisory tasks. So when push comes to shove, they elect to focus on the technical tasks that are more familiar. For people like Pat, this only further complicates the problem.

Pat had waited for a long time for a promotion to a supervisory position in her department. She was good with people and good with the technical things that needed to be done. She knew she could manage the projects she had now as well as oversee other people's projects. That would have been fine if there had been no new projects. However, her boss continued to bring
her new projects. Pat looked around at her team and decided they were too busy to take on something new. She also knew the expectations of her boss so she decided to tackle the new projects herself. In less than a month she was overwhelmed and wound up working overtime every week. Meanwhile her people were waiting for her to assist them on their own projects—but she didn’t have time to help them.

Unfortunately there are no hard and fast rules you can follow as a supervisor. However, you can do some things to help you sort through this paradox. First, don’t take on responsibility for doing everything yourself. When a new project comes your way, assign it to one of your staff and put him or her in charge. Second, recognize that you can use your expertise to help others. Instead of doing so many things yourself, help others develop their own skills by sharing your expertise with them. Third, develop your time management skills. Determine what you can and should be doing to be most effective. Don’t schedule your time so tight that you fail to allow time for handling supervisory issues.

**Little Effort Is Devoted to Training**

The second paradox is that although competent management is needed, often not enough effort is devoted to training supervisors and improving their management and leadership skills. Since supervisors are expected to be primarily task oriented, the emphasis frequently is on getting the job done and not on learning better management and leadership skills.

Rather than waiting for someone to provide training, be proactive and make it your own responsibility to learn all you can about your new role. Several books are listed in the Bibliography of this course that you may find helpful. Be on the lookout for books that focus on some of the specific skills for improving the effectiveness of first-line supervisors.

Getting the most out of people is not easy, nor is it done by merely giving orders. Regardless of your present level of experience, there is always room to improve your supervisory skills. Seminars and training courses can also assist you. You can overcome this paradox by taking the initiative to develop your supervisory skills.

**The Way Work Is Organized**

A third paradox is evident in the way a first-line supervisor’s work is organized. The emphasis is frequently on “getting the work out,” and the goals are expressed in terms of quotas, standards, units, or some measure of productivity or performance. Some businesses place the emphasis on getting out new products, bringing in new customers, or providing quality customer service. The fact is that things get done through the efforts of people. As a result, the development of people skills may not be given enough emphasis when preparing first-line supervisors to assume their new responsibilities.

As with the training paradox, the key is to be proactive. Though you may not be involved in setting organizational goals, budgeting, or making many other managerial decisions, as a first-line supervisor you are always involved with the day-to-day operations that directly affect an organization’s product...
or service. Do what you can to ensure the work is organized in a manner than enables you and your team to be most efficient and effective.

**Supervising Tasks and Learning Skills**

A fourth paradox is that you must constantly choose between supervising specific job tasks and learning new skills. You also have to decide how much time to spend on each area. There are literally hundreds of questions and only a limited number of resources you can turn to. In the end, a great deal of your success depends on your own efforts at self-development.

Use the results of the self-assessment you completed earlier (Exercise 1–1) to identify the skills you need to develop. Determine where you can put your efforts to get the most return on the time and energy you invest. Look at self-development as just that—an investment. What you learn and the skills you develop now will pay future dividends. Don’t wait. The sooner you invest in your own self-development, the sooner you’ll reap the rewards.

**Exercise 4: Addressing the Paradoxes of First-line Supervision**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** What can you do to proactively address the paradoxes just described? Take a few minutes to write down some specific actions you can take. Sample responses are listed for each item.

1. **Being a Supervisor and a Technical Expert**

   *Remember to allow time in my schedule for supervisory tasks as well as technical tasks.*

2. **Little Effort Devoted to Training**

   *Be aware of supervisory training classes that are offered and ask to attend those that would be beneficial.*

3. **The Way Work Is Organized**

   *Keep focused on my relationship with my employees as well as how much work they get done.*

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4. Supervising Tasks and Learning Skills

Take the initiative to develop myself by asking questions of other experienced, successful supervisors.

LEADERSHIP STYLE AND BEHAVIOR

You have just learned what it takes to be an effective first-line supervisor and the importance of the first-line supervisor's role. Also, you are now aware of the paradoxes, or challenges, associated with being a first-line supervisor. The next thing you need to consider is, “How do I want to supervise others?” In other words, what leadership style do you want to adopt? Leadership style refers to the general way you deal with your work group. Some supervisor-leaders are authoritarian and domineering, others are supportive and participative. There is no absolutely correct style. Your style is determined partly by your personality and partly by how effectively you can adapt to various situations.

Your first inclination may be to adopt the style of a previous boss whom you respected or admired. If that person’s style seemed to get results, that style may be the logical way to supervise. If you consider your previous boss to be a bad example, you may have learned only what not to do, rather than what to do. Either way, if your style is rigidly based on what you have observed in others, problems may arise if the situation changes. A style that works in one situation may not get the job done in another.

Task vs. People

As a first-line supervisor you are responsible for getting the work done through your people. How you approach that responsibility is a reflection of your leadership style. Some supervisors put more emphasis on getting the work done and less emphasis on their relationships with people. These supervisors are said to have a task-oriented leadership style. A lot of work gets done, but sometimes with a negative impact on morale and interpersonal relationships.

Other supervisors put more emphasis on their relationships with their people and less emphasis on getting the job done. These supervisors have a people-oriented leadership style. They have a lot of happy people working for them, but not much work gets accomplished; what does get accomplished may not always be of the best quality.

Whether you tend to be more task-oriented or more people-oriented affects the way you supervise others. How you supervise others also has an impact on your employees and the quality and quantity of work that is getting done.
## Exercise 5: What’s Your Leadership Style?

**Instructions:** Read each of the statements below. Circle the number on the scale from 1 to 10 that best reflects how you would behave in the situation described.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Score 1</th>
<th>Score 2</th>
<th>Score 3</th>
<th>Score 4</th>
<th>Score 5</th>
<th>Score 6</th>
<th>Score 7</th>
<th>Score 8</th>
<th>Score 9</th>
<th>Score 10</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I explain exactly how I want the work to be done.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I let people make suggestions on how to do the job.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>My primary concern is getting the job done.</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My primary concern is how people feel about their work.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I establish the standards for people.</td>
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<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>I let the people set their own standards.</td>
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<td>9</td>
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<tr>
<td>I make the decisions for my work group.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>5</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I let people make their own decisions.</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tell people how much time they have to complete a task.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ask people to tell me how long a task will take.</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect people to ask me questions before they act.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect people to answer their own questions.</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect people to make work their first priority.</td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I understand people have things to do that are more important than work.</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>I want frequent progress reports about work status.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I only want to know when a job is completed.</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>The less discussion about a job the better.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
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<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I like thorough discussions before work starts.</td>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I expect people to be working with minimal socializing.</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's okay for people to socialize while they are working.</td>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Add the numbers you have circled for the ten statements.

Total Score: ____
Scoring
0-35: You tend to be more task-oriented and want to make sure the job is done the way you want it done.
36-69: You tend to have a balanced leadership style. You want to get the job done, but you are also concerned about people.
70-100: You tend to be more people-oriented. You give people more freedom in deciding what to do and how to do it.

Are you more task-oriented or more people-oriented? People who are extremely task-oriented are likely to be those who provide a lot of direction, make most of the decisions, and keep things under tight control. Their unspoken phrase is “my way or the highway.” People who are extremely people-oriented, on the other hand, may appear to be wishy-washy. They may avoid making decisions for fear of making someone unhappy. They want the group to make the decisions. Their unspoken phrase is “do whatever you think is best.” Supervisors who rely on either of these extremes will likely experience problems because using the same style all the time and with all people is not effective.

Generally, the best leadership style is one that is balanced—where there is a concern for both getting the job done and taking care of the people. A balanced approach requires choosing a leadership style that takes into account the needs of the employee and the circumstances at any given time. The effective supervisor recognizes that there are times when a task-oriented approach is best and there are other times when a people-oriented approach is best. Their choice of a leadership style depends on three primary factors: experience level, information available, and time available.

Experience Level
How much experience your employees have should influence your choice of a leadership style. For example, a new employee who has little or no experience about a job needs more direction and guidance than an experienced employee. With new employees, you normally need to be more task-oriented. They want and need to be provided with lots of direction. On the other hand, experienced employees can resent being told exactly how to do a job, especially if they have developed their own methods based on their experience. A more people-oriented leadership style would probably be more appropriate with experienced employees.

Information Available
You also should consider how much information is available regarding the job. Are all the facts, figures, and expectations well known or are there lots of unanswered questions? Is the job similar to one that has been done before? Are the standards clear? Is there a definite time when it has to be done? If the employee is unable to answer these questions, a more task-oriented approach would be best because more direction will be required to get the job done correctly. However, if there are few questions and the standards are clear, you can allow the employee more latitude in deciding how to get the job done.
Time Available
The third consideration is how much time is available to get the job done. If there is a short turnaround time you may need to take a more task-oriented approach and make most of the decisions yourself. There may not be enough time to discuss alternatives or involve other people in making decisions. You will have to decide what to do and how to do it. If you are not under pressure to get the job done immediately, you can take time to get input from your people. They may be able to provide suggestions on how best to get the job done. As you consider the time factor, keep in mind the old saying, “Haste makes waste.” In some cases, even when you have a short time frame to get a job done, you may want to invest part of that time getting input from your people. If they have some say in what is to be done, they are likely to be more committed to helping you get it done in the time available.

In the end, your leadership style depends on how you view your people and the task to be done. When possible, take a balanced approach that matches the needs and skills of the employees with your preferred leadership style. Exhibit 1–3 shows the relationship among the factors to consider when selecting a leadership style.

Other Considerations Affecting Leadership Style
First-line supervisors usually have questions about how hard or easy they should be in dealing with their employees. In addition, there is usually considerable pressure from superiors to “Get the job done and don’t worry about offending someone.” You will see rude, rough people succeeding and

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Exhibit 1–3
Selecting a Leadership Style

The extremes of the task-oriented and people-oriented styles are described below. Effective supervisors don’t choose their style based on their own personal whims. Instead, they consider the experience, information, and time available before they decide which leadership style will be most successful.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task-Oriented</th>
<th>Balanced</th>
<th>People-Oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The task is most important</td>
<td>Make a decision after considering the effect of:</td>
<td>People should be happy at work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do it my way</td>
<td>• Experience</td>
<td>• What do you want to do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ll show and tell you what I want</td>
<td>• Information</td>
<td>• Do what you think will work best</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know what’s best</td>
<td>• Time</td>
<td>• Anything is okay with me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>My way or the highway</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Goal: To get the job done the way the leader wants it done.  Goal: To get the job done and take care of people at the same time.  Goal: To keep the people happy and hope that the job gets done.
sincere, nice people failing. You will likely hear comments such as “Nice guys finish last” and “Winning is the only thing.”

Keep in mind that there is a middle ground in most situations. The best advice is to be yourself and don’t forget that you need your employees to get the job done. Your people want and need you to be an effective leader. In the long run, learning to adapt your style to different employees and different situations will help you achieve the results you want.

Here are three things you should consider when selecting your leadership style:

1. Delegation Skill
2. Organizational Constraints
3. Power Centers and Formal Structure

**Delegation Skill**
Few things are more important than developing the ability to delegate effectively. Like most new supervisors you may have difficulty deciding exactly what should and should not be delegated. When under pressure to complete a job, you may decide that it would be quicker to do it yourself. If this happens, a delegation opportunity is lost, and the chance to develop your leadership skills is forfeited. A lost delegation opportunity is also a missed opportunity to build employee competence and skills.

**Organizational Constraints**
You have to be aware of the predominant leadership style in your work environment. The nature of the organization also influences how you are expected to supervise. Learn to work within those organizational constraints and develop a leadership style that enables you to bring out the best in others and to deliver quality work.

For example, if the organization is critical of mistakes and failures, people will avoid risks. In this situation, focus on learning and continuous improvement. This enables you to help others see mistakes as learning opportunities and encourage them to try new things without fear. If your organization wants to maintain the status quo, focus on helping people master their current job and use crosstraining to build greater skill breadth. This provides an opportunity for you to use your coaching and delegation skills for personal growth and to build organizational capability.

If the organization is highly “change” oriented, there may not always be procedures to follow; innovative leadership may be a prized commodity. Organizations that encourage internal competition need first-line supervisors who provide coaching and supportive leadership. As a coach, you help employees focus on doing high quality work and support their progress. As a supporter, you help your team make good decisions that are in the best interest of the organization, the customers, and the team.

**Power Centers and Formal Structure**
Power centers are the people within the organization who shape its informal attitudes. In different organizations, certain departments have varying
degrees of power. Depending on what drives the organization—sales, marketing, accounting, or production—that group may predominate.

Your influence may be affected by what the power centers within the organization normally allow to happen. You have to be very clear about the effect of your group on other areas. Where there is a lot of internal conflict, the supervisor often gets caught up in other people’s warfare. Be extra careful in these situations; you may win a battle and lose a war.

Be very sure that your personal and group goals are aligned with those of your boss. Don’t get involved in high-level warfare. Identify what is most important and concentrate your efforts in that direction. In hostile organization environments, there may be only limited opportunities for leadership. Under these circumstances, performance and productivity mainly depend on the amount of interdepartmental cooperation necessary to get the work done.

Exercise 6: Leadership Style Considerations

INSTRUCTIONS: Based on your knowledge of your organization and your own leadership preferences, what will you consider when choosing your leadership style? What action can you take to minimize any negative impact these considerations might have on your style? One example is given to get you started.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factors Affecting Your Style</th>
<th>Action You Plan to Take</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to do it myself</td>
<td>Take time necessary to train employees so I can delegate work to them rather than doing it all myself.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This chapter lays the foundation for making the transition from employee to first-line supervisor. Several important issues were discussed. First, you must be prepared to make the transition to first-line supervisor. Your confidence in being able to make the transition can affect your potential for success as a first-line supervisor.

Second, you need to be aware of the importance of first-line supervisors to an organization. They perform several valuable functions such as supervising the day-to-day operations, being the first line of contact for employees, impacting the span of control, and developing themselves for middle and upper management positions.

Third, first-line supervisors must deal with the paradoxes that go along with the job. For example, you are expected to be a supervisor and use your technical expertise at the same time. Second, although management and supervisory skills are required, often very little formal training is provided. Also, the way the work is organized often puts a premium on getting the work out rather than preparing first-line supervisors for their new responsibilities. In the end supervisors often have to choose between supervising specific tasks and learning new skills.

And fourth, we discussed the issue of leadership style. Successful supervisors select a leadership style that takes into account both the task to be done and the people involved. They try to take a balanced approach whenever possible that considers the experience of their employees, the amount of information available, and the time available. The most successful supervisors try to match their preferred leadership style with the needs and skills of their employees.

**Exercise 7: Taking It Back to the Workplace**

*Instructions:* Now that you have completed the reading and the activities in this chapter, it's time to think specifically about how to apply what you have learned. The following questions are designed to help you consider what you need to do to succeed back in the workplace.

- Have you developed an action plan for making the transition to first-line supervision?
- Have you identified what you need to do to have a positive impact in your new role?
- Are you ready to deal with the paradoxes of being a first-line supervisor? What will you do?
- What adjustments do you need to make to your leadership style?
Review Questions

1. How much time do new first-line supervisors typically spend supervising their employees?
   (a) 5 to 25 percent
   (b) 15 to 35 percent
   (c) 25 to 45 percent
   (d) 35 to 55 percent

   1. (b)

2. The phrase “where the rubber meets the road” refers to:
   (a) the supervisor’s responsibility for day-to-day operations.
   (b) the supervisor being the first line of contact for employees.
   (c) having the right span of control to ensure happy customers.
   (d) the supervisor moving up the organization ladder.

   2. (a)

3. Which of the following is a paradox of first-line supervision?
   (a) Training your employees to do their jobs
   (b) Developing your people skills necessary to be successful
   (c) Having goals and objectives expressed in quotas, standards, and units
   (d) Deciding between helping an employee develop skills and working on a project

   3. (d)
4. Which leadership style would be most appropriate to use when making a job assignment to a new employee?
   (a) Task-oriented
   (b) People-oriented
   (c) Balanced
   (d) Any leadership style can be used with new employees

4. (a)

5. Which of the following is an example of an organizational constraint that can affect your ability to lead?
   (a) Upper management’s approach to the business
   (b) Your own attitude toward the job
   (c) The length of time it takes to be promoted
   (d) Your experience in supervising others

5. (a)