



# Help your front line supervisor improve productivity

Often, the front line supervisor (FLS) has to walk a tightrope when it comes to productivity. He is responsible for completing work according to schedule, but the organizational structure he needs to be successful is rarely in place. Roles and responsibilities can be blurred, and he often lacks the training and coaching in management and leadership behaviors necessary for driving output. Additionally, performance management systems either don't exist or are extremely complicated, making the job of the FLS almost impossible. However, by actively addressing these issues, companies can lay the foundations for their FLS to contribute to sustainable productivity improvement.

## Organization structure

The first step is to ensure organizations are structured to improve and facilitate coordination of active supervision with simple and clear one-to-one interfaces at each level. This provides the basis for communicating expectations and reporting on performance. In order to clarify roles and responsibilities, organizations should spend

time, money and energy creating a responsible, accountable, consulted and informed (RACI) chart for each process within the company. This consists of a comprehensive list of the activities and decisions required for the process to function properly. Individuals are then assigned RACI roles according to their parts in the process.

A good example of a RACI structure can be found in routine maintenance. The maintenance manager is accountable for ensuring preventative maintenance (PM) is performed according to schedule. The FLS managing the craftsmen who are performing the work is responsible. The operations manager is consulted as to when the work can be performed. The reliability engineer is informed when the PM is complete and what information was gathered.

Once the matrix has been created, workshops must be held with all of those involved so they understand why the roles are structured this way and how to follow it.

## Instilling leadership behaviors

Once the correct structure and responsibilities have been clarified, the right man-

agement and leadership behaviors need to be developed and implemented. This means being proactive in managing the work and not waiting for issues to cause delays in execution. Your FLS must be trained and coached in the use of the eight active supervision behaviors: assigning work, giving direction, following up, positive feedback, constructive feedback, coaching and supporting, problem solving and reporting.

Once the FLS has been trained and coached, he can utilize these active supervision behaviors to manage the completion of work within his area of responsibility. Work should be assigned to a craftsman to be completed on a given day. When the FLS follows up to ensure the work is being performed, he could find the craftsmen are delayed as they wait for operations to release the equipment. When consulted about performing the assigned work, he is then able to ask why operations agreed to have the equipment ready when this was not possible. The conversation, held within the structure of a RACI driven organization, can be positive and result in resolving issues quickly.

## Management Control and Reporting System (MCRS)

Finally, an MCRS (also referred to as a management operating system) should be constructed so it is effective from the FLS level all the way up to the site manager. It should consist of meetings and key performance indicators, which measure performance, capture delays and provide an opportunity for solving problems. The FLS must utilize the MCRS to quantify and qualify the top issues, problems and concerns that reduce productivity and then feed that information to every level and functional group within the organization.

For an FLS to be successful, the right structure, behaviors and reporting systems must be in place. Without them, issues and delays will not be resolved and improvement will be hindered. Once companies create the right environment, the FLS will provide guidance and empower workers to achieve good performance on a daily basis, resulting in the safe, efficient completion of work and, ultimately, better productivity.

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