



Introducing a **NEW SERIES**, Supervisor Talk:

Tools and ideas to support supervisors



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This article is the first in a series, discussing the challenges that supervisors face and some potential solutions or efficiencies that exist, understanding that one size does not fit all. Every supervisor's work situation is unique but hopefully this series will uncover some new tools and ideas to support current supervisors and also help attract high performing workers into supervisor roles.

A supervisor shortage is a looming crisis in many industries; supervisors are spread too thin and the work demands keep increasing. Many workers look at their supervisors and are not motivated to take on those roles with that extra work and responsibility that comes with the title. This is not an easy situation to address but over the next few months, I am going to unpack some of the challenges and discuss efficient ways to fulfill all the responsibilities of supervisors.

I will also dive into some of the thorny areas of supervision such as discipline, alcohol and drugs at work, and building up teamwork and morale.

In order to find best practices and good ideas, I've looked both inside and outside of the forest industry. High-performing supervisors are developed in many industries such as aviation, oil and gas and emergency service sectors. I'll tap into some of their processes for how they are doing that. I'll share some of my personal experiences too and I hope to get feedback from supervisors out there about what has worked for them and what tactics have blown up in their faces.

To start off, I am going to talk about building a strong workplace culture.

“*Dear Supy,*

My crew is lazy! They don't know how good they have it with town jobs all the time and easy blocks. Every time I go out there, they are complaining, morale is down and the quality of the work is poor.

”

Help!

Wally Woodsman

Well Wally,

Step 1: take a good look at yourself and the type of attitude you bring to work. How do you present yourself at work? If the answer is “not great” then that can definitely rub off on your crew. Start polishing up your attitude. Don't be a fake but do have enthusiasm for the work that needs to be done and be a positive, optimistic influence on everyone.

Step 2: get the facts. Find out if the crew really does have something legit to complain about. Spend time on the project to observe and talk with your crew one on one to get the story on how things have been going. It may be that there are some small fixes that can be done to improve the worksite and attitudes. If problems can't be fixed right away, come up with a plan and timeline to fix them and let the crew know that steps are being taken to fix things. Caution: set realistic goals for these solutions; nothing lowers morale like not carrying through on promises.

Step 3: If everything is going fine with the work itself, then it's time to look at the people and personalities in the crew. Have you set yourself up for failure by grouping the wrong people together? Some people just won't get along together and changing how you mix up your crew can fix some of those issues. Maybe some workers have been doing the same job for many years and need a change. Perhaps you can move them to a different piece of equipment or get them to help you out with some of your supervisor responsibilities for a welcome change of pace. On the other hand, think about if you have been challenging and changing things up too much for a group that just likes consistency and no big changes at work.

Keep in mind that there is rarely an answer or tactic that works in all situations. However, there are always benefits to communication and getting to know your crew better. What starts out as a casual “how's it going” check-in with a worker can turn into a gold mine of opportunities to improve things at work. Embrace that part of the supervisor role. You need to be a communicator and a problem solver to do the job well. Talk with other supervisors, most are happy to share war stories about challenging situations and how they were eventually resolved.

As a supervisor, it's easy to think that it is all up to you to make the right decision and make sure production targets are met. However, if things are starting to go sideways, don't suffer in silence. Talk to your crew first – ask them for what they think the problems are and what will work better. Also be sure that you talk with your manager or owner of the company. Talk with them regularly, when things are going well and when problems occur. If you are a one person owner and supervisor type operation, build a good working relationship with your contract manager. They have a big interest in helping you succeed so use them as a resource to get you the information you need to make decisions and also ask them for some flexibility when the going gets tough. Again, good communication is your best tactic in these situations.

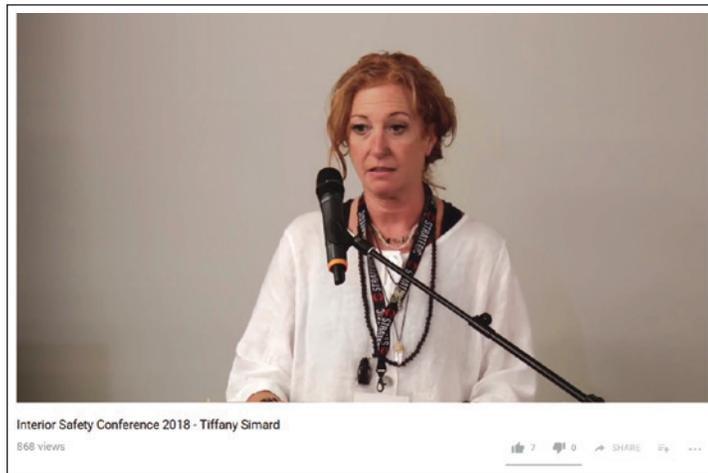
Next time on supervisor talk: What is a good leader anyway? Do supervisors need to be good leaders?

Talk among yourselves and email me your stories and ideas at Messier@bcforestsafesafe.org 📧

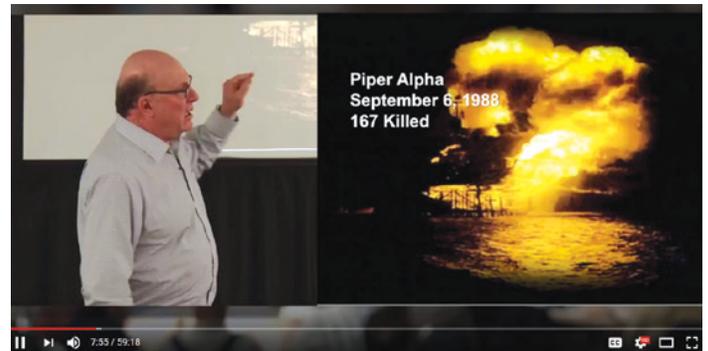
YouTube hits

Check out these two great videos from the 2018 Interior Safety Conference in Kamloops, if you haven't seen them already.

The first one is a heartfelt message from Tiffany Simard who lost her husband to a workplace incident: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2DJywhLLCr8>



The second is a captivating presentation by Corrie Pitzer which will really make you think about safety programs and if they are leading to the outcomes that we want: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mwGSpCbpxU>



Upcoming training

If you would like to see how a training course can meet your organization's needs, please let us know. We are committed to working with you to find the right training solution. We may be able to tailor a program to your specific needs and deliver it in a way that is most convenient for your operations.

Scheduled training for the next few months (does not include tailored sessions):

Internal Auditor Theory BASE 4

Oct 3 Vernon
Oct 4 Vernon

Falling Supervisor training

Oct 1 Prince George
Oct 15 Vernon
Nov 5 Campbell River
Nov 26 Nanaimo

Forest Supervisor training

Module 1: Due Diligence (1)

Module 2: Communications (2)

Module 3: Leadership & Professionalism (3)

Nov 7 Nanaimo (1)
Nov 8 Nanaimo (2)
Nov 9 Nanaimo (3)

Nov 19 Prince George (1)
Nov 20 Prince George (2)
Nov 21 Prince George (3)
Dec 5 Vernon (1)
Dec 6 Vernon (2)
Dec 7 Vernon (3)

Incident Investigation training

Oct 1 Terrace
Oct 3 Houston
Oct 15 Prince George
Oct 18 Campbell River
Oct 25 Langley
Oct 29 Vernon
Nov 5 Williams Lake
Dec 3 Nanaimo
Dec 10 Kamloops

Individual Owner Operator OHS training & Refresher training

Oct 27 Teleconference
Nov 24 Teleconference
Dec 15 Teleconference

Joint Occupational Health and Safety Committee training

Oct 2 Terrace
Oct 4 Houston
Oct 16 Prince George
Oct 19 Campbell River
Oct 26 Langley

Oct 30 Vernon
Nov 6 Williams Lake
Dec 4 Nanaimo
Dec 11 Kamloops

Small Employer OHS training & Refresher training

Oct 18 Williams Lake
Nov 22 Langley
Nov 29 Prince George
Nov 29 Vernon
Dec 6 Nanaimo
Dec 13 Kamloops

View the full 2018 training calendar here: www.bcforestsafesafe.org/fscapps/calendar/calendar.php. Please check back often as course dates may change if there are insufficient participants. All training is offered on a not for profit, cost-recovery basis. Email training@bcforestsafesafe.org or call toll-free **1-877-741-1060** for general information, or email Gary Banys at banys@bcforestsafesafe.org to answer any questions you might have about course content and/or about tailoring courses to meet your company's needs at a location of your choice. 🌲