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BUILDING EMPLOYEE SECURITY

What the Supervisor can Do

Supervisors have a responsibility to do all they can to build security in themselves as well as to establish conditions which will develop security in their subordinates. Let us consider some of the things which the supervisor can do to eliminate insecurity on the part of the people he directs. It is of little value to detect the symptoms, or even to determine the causes of insecurity unless we can prescribe some remedies. It should be understood that the following suggestions are not presented as cure-alls or panaceas for all the situations that may arise from employee insecurity. Rather they are offered only as indications of the directions in which the final solutions will be found. It should be borne in mind, however, that the final solutions must always be devised by the supervisor in the light of the facts in the particular situation.

a) *Satisfactory wages and working hours* — This is a factor over which the supervisor does not have direct control. He can, however, contribute to the security of the employee in this area by fair efficiency ratings, and recommendations for promotions when they are deserved.

b) *Continuance on job* — This usually lies outside the jurisdiction of the supervisor. However, he can at least let the employees know as much of the facts of the situation as he knows.

c) *Fairness and justice on the part of the supervisor* — This is the supervisor's responsibility. No matter what his private likes and dislikes, he must guard against favoritism. The insecure supervisor often surrounds himself with a few favorites to increase his own sense of security. This, however, develops greater insecurity in all employees, including the favorites. Their continued favored position depends on emotional and, consequently, unstable factors rather than on anything they can do or control.

d) *Emotional stability on the part of the supervisor* — Again, the responsibility lies with the supervisor to realize the effect of his moods on others and thus to control himself. The supervisor must realize that he is a leader and, as such, must act like one at all times.

e) *Maintenance of harmonious working relations with other employees* — This is definitely within the limits of supervisory responsibility. There are a number of things the supervisor can do : 1) Determine which employees are contributing to the insecurity of others by aggressive and uncooperative behavior. Ascertain if it is possible to lessen this person's insecurity. 2. Transfer or otherwise isolate or remove the insecure employee if ways of helping him to gain security have failed. 3. By accentuating other conditions of security in the organization, compensate for this one insecurity factor.

f) *Ability to do the work required* — The supervisor's answer here is either better training, better job placement, or both.

g) *Sufficient training and clear instruction* — Here the supervisor's responsibilities are clear. Improve training, particularly of new employees, and be certain that instructions are given clearly and meaningfully.

h) *Good working conditions* — Often supervisors fail to realize the importance of maintaining good working conditions. Poor tools, unsatisfactory environmental conditions, etc. cut down an employee's efficiency and contribute to insecurity.

i) *Fair recognition* — Every supervisor should realize the importance of praise and recognition of achievement in developing security among employees.

j) *Foreknowledge of change* — Nothing contributes more to a feeling of insecurity than sudden change, particularly if adequate explanation is not given. Insofar as possible, each supervisor should carefully prepare an employee for changes affecting him.

k) *Individual treatment* — Every supervisor should help his employees feel that he looks on them as individuals and is genuinely concerned about their problems and progress.

l) *Understanding help* — Each supervisor must realize that leadership means giving help where needed by the individual to overcome his work obstacles. Leadership is not based on ability to criticize but on the ability to help. Such help, in turn, must be based on an understanding of the needs of particular employees, and thus must result from continuous efforts to study the employees as individuals as well as members of the group.

m) *Understanding of reasons* — Each employee needs to understand the purposes of his work so that he can appreciate its importance and thus predict its continuance.

n) *Opportunity to participate in decision-making* — Every supervisor needs to take advantage of each opportunity to bring employees into decision-making on problems pertaining to their work.

The foregoing list of factors highlights the great responsibility resting on supervisors and administrators to develop conditions conducive to security. As has been indicated, the supervisor who is himself insecure will breed insecurity in his work group. When any unit or department shows a common pattern of insecurity reactions among its employees, the cause inevitably can be traced to supervisory insecurity.

(Extract of an article by Leland P. Bradford,
Personnel, January 1946).