



Dear Friend,
Soup of Soup

"Say that again. You're taking what?"

"I'm taking 'Soup of soup'!"

This is how a recent conversation started with a friend, a doctoral candidate who was sharing the list of courses on her fall schedule.

So, tell me. Did your mind go where mine did? Did you see giant cans of soup? Steaming bowls? Croutons? I sure did!

But, I was quickly corrected. "Soup of soup" is REALLY "Sup of sup" (pronounced "soop"). Yes, they sound the same, but the meanings are very different. Instead of perfecting split pea with ham, this curriculum highlights the art of supervising supervisors. Ah!

We laughed on, painfully dissecting the topic and somehow weaving in every variety of soup we could imagine. But, as we did, it became apparent how closely aligned **Executive Advantage** work is to my friend's fall course selection. As folks who often are called upon to support supervisors, as well as people who supervise supervisors, I guess you could call what we do "sup of sup support".

So, in this month's edition of **EA Insights**, that's what's coming -- *sup of sup support*. Let's focus in on why supervisors are important to companies. If you're in the seat, this just might help you function more effectively. And, if you're not in that seat, it just might help you to better understand and assist the one who is.

Serving your soup...um, sup!

All the best,

June

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There's More to Supervision Than a Title

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How do people where you work become supervisors?

-- Are they really dedicated hard-working people?

-- Are they experts in the field?

-- Are they the folks with the most seniority?

-- Are they the best at connecting with higher-ups?

A critical factor -- one that often is under emphasized in making the selection of a supervisor -- is the person's ability to *supervise*. (Surprise,

surprise!) However, if an organization is to set and accomplish its goals, if it is to function smoothly, if it's to be a place where people want to work and are productive, it needs just *that* in its supervisors. They

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"Quotes"

"We are very pleased with the smooth and efficient way in which [they] worked together in this situation."
~Deb Baker

"It's important as we bring this system forward that we make sure supervisors are properly educated and trained in what it means to evaluate performance. . . . We have to assure people that we're going to have adequate feedback, that there's going to be a system ... that is fair and transparent."
~Michael Chertoff

"Get to know your team members as people. When you take the time and make the effort to reveal your humanity, and to get to know others as more than a worker, you build trust. When you do that, it also has a wonderful leveling effect."
~Steve Coleman

"Everybody helped out everybody else, so it was pretty smooth."
~Craig Conroy

*"Now the question becomes, who is going to get something done? Who is going to achieve results? *** And that's where we say look at ... who*



must be people who are poised and prepared not simply to work well independently but who can do well at overseeing a team.

What is a supervisor?

In some organizations, the term *supervisor* only represents a person at the first management level. These are people who only have line staff members reporting to them; they don't have direct reports who hold management positions themselves.

However, in other organizations, a *supervisor* is anyone who has responsibility for other people. Stated differently, a supervisor can be any person, who's been given authority to act on behalf of the organization to hire, transfer, discipline, fire, direct, assign, reward (or to recommend actions like these for) a designated group of people within the company.

Why is a supervisor important?

Whatever an organization's supervisory structure, the job of a supervisor really boils down to three main responsibility areas -- results, functioning, and people. Let's look at each area briefly.

Results -- First and foremost, an organization is in place to get work done -- to show results. To do that, most organizations are broken down into smaller units, each of which is charged with carrying out some aspect of the work. Accordingly, each supervisor -- as the management representative for his or her team -- must ensure that the work of the team is done and done properly. It's the supervisor's job to oversee the group's effort so that the organization fully benefits from the knowledge, skills, and expertise of that unit or department and so that the team contributes its share to accomplishing the overall goals.

Smooth Functioning -- Supervisors also are important to an organization because they should be the people who are dedicated to smooth team functioning. And, achieving smooth functioning is no easy feat.

To do the job at hand, teams need a range of resources; securing those is an aspect of smooth functioning. Ensuring that the environment is conducive to the work is another part of the smooth functioning puzzle. Smooth functioning also entails providing the information needed to allow people to do their work and to be active, knowledgeable participants in the workplace. A supervisor contributes to smooth functioning by encouraging shared problem-solving and innovation so that the team is tapping into its best thinking to tackle issues that currently exist and to stand at the cutting edge on matters likely to arise. And, a supervisor supports smooth functioning when he or she educates and enforces company rules so that treatment on the team, and across the larger organization, is consistent and equitable.

People -- There is no supervisory responsibility without people. After all, it's *people* that are being supervised. Thus, an essential part of the supervisor's job is to interact with and to work on behalf of each member of the team. A supervisor is the point person to ensure that each person is directed appropriately in terms of his or her work, is treated fairly, is given room to grow, and has certain other basic workplace needs met in order to be positioned to be a productive contributor and a successful person.

Supervision... it's more than a title.

Supervision...it's more than an inherited position.

Supervision, in actuality, is a critical organizational role -- one that involves people who are committed to and skilled at fostering an environment in which great things are able to happen for the company and for the people who comprise it.

So, as you think about the current supervision landscape in your workplace (or as you look at how you're supervising today), could you use some support? Why don't you let **Executive Advantage** help you turn things around? Contact us today to explore how we can partner with you. We're here to help you build your thriving [career](#) or [business](#).



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About Executive Advantage

At **Executive Advantage**, we are committed to providing results-based business and management consulting, leadership development, and coaching support. We partner with business leaders to build healthy, well-functioning organizations, where goals are met and people thrive. We also partner with individuals to create professional (and personal) lives with clearer direction, improved results, and greater balance.

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actually delivers."
~Andrew Cuomo

"It's gone very smooth considering ... what could have gone wrong."
~Michael Gross

"I ... believe in helping an employer function more productively. For then, we will have a claim to ... greater participation in the benefits of running a smooth industrial machine."
~Sidney Hillman

"Nothing worthwhile comes easily. Half effort does not produce half results. It produces no results. Work, continuous work and hard work, is the only way to accomplish results that last."
~Hamilton Holt

"We believe the first-line supervisors are critical to the ... process. They're in the middle of the fray. They're on the floor."
~David Lawson

"We have a history of working well with team members.... We're a service business and when you're a service business, you need to treat your team members well."
~Kathy Shepard

"I think it's really good for the team members to see that somebody recognizes their efforts. I think is satisfying on a pretty wide level[.]"
~Ed Zimmer