

Developing Supervisors into Frontline Leaders

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Prelude

Organisations have long since recognised the criticality of the “Supervisor” in achieving results in safety, productivity and employee relations. Not only do we expect Supervisors to ensure workforce compliance with safety management requirements, we expect them to be leaders; to impart the organisations safety culture and drive work crews towards achieving zero harm with increasingly demanding operational targets. Added to this challenge, is the current transient nature of the workforce.

Industry drivers have resulted in many new Supervisors entering our organisations and/or the rapid escalation of individuals who display technical talent into these roles. Although we expect Supervisors to manage productivity, safety and personnel issues, many have little or no formal training in these areas.

In recognition of the critical role that Supervisors play in achieving safety success and in reinforcing cultural and system requirements, Monadelphous has developed a Supervisors Leadership Development program to provide core skills in areas considered key for success. Whilst recognizing that externally delivered training has a place in skills development, when addressing areas such as organisational expectations and culture, it is more meaningful and has a larger impact, when delivered by the Leaders of an organisation.

Introduction

Monadelphous is a leading engineering group providing extensive engineering construction, maintenance and industrial services to the resources, energy and infrastructure sectors.

Monadelphous is a highly customer-focused organisation with over 30 years of operation. Major offices are located in Perth, Brisbane and Adelaide, with regional operations in key resource industry centres around Australia. Monadelphous is an ASX Top 200 company, has maintained Group wide quality accreditation to ISO 9001 and currently has over 4000 employees.

Our purpose

- To deliver *safe* and reliable construction, maintenance and industrial service solutions to Industry.

Our vision

- We will double in size every five years by being recognised as a truly great company to work for, to work with, and to invest in. We are committed to the *safety, wellbeing and development of our people*, the delivery of outstanding service to our customers, and the provision of superior returns to our shareholders.

Our Core Values

- Safety and Wellbeing is the first of the Monadelphous Core Values; “We show concern and actively care for others. We always think and act safely”.

Monadelphous is comprised of three main Operational Divisions.

Maintenance and Industrial Services delivers multi-disciplinary maintenance services, shutdowns and capital works, including:

- Fixed and mobile plant maintenance.
- Minor and sustaining capital works.
- Shutdown planning, management and execution.
- Dragline and shovel shutdown and maintenance.
- Instrumentation and electrical maintenance services.
- Specialist concrete and structural maintenance.

- Fabrication.
- Labour and equipment hire.

Within Maintenance and Industrial Services, focus is on the development of long term relationships and service provision to customers. Supervisor tenure is therefore more longer term, with the possible exception of shut-down management, where supervision and blue collar workers may be more transient.

Engineering Construction provides large scale, multidisciplinary project management and construction services, including:-

- Vertical construction packages including civil and electrical disciplines.
- Turnkey design and construct services.
- Fabrication and installation of structural steel, tankage and mechanical works.
- Local and overseas fabrication and procurement.
- Plant commissioning.
- Demolition and remediation works.

Although core Supervisory teams are in place, the nature of project work results in many new Supervisors entering the Organisation for the duration of a project.

MIE - provides comprehensive electrical engineering services which include:

- Installation of power and lighting systems, switchboards, high voltage cabling networks and motor control centres.
- Installation of project infrastructure systems including cabling, junction boxes, cable ladders, conduit and pipe systems.
- Procurement of device and materials for service application and distribution.

The Supervisor – A Key Role in Success

Frontline Supervision is the organisational layer within our businesses that can influence how successful we are in all key result areas. It has long been recognised, that this role is critical in achieving good results in terms of safety; “The Supervisor...is the key man in industrial accident prevention. His application of the art of supervision to the control of worker performance is the factor of greatest influence in successful accident prevention”. (WV Heinrich, 1959).

The Supervisor is often considered the “link” between Senior Management and the workforce. Although Senior Managers conduct frequent site visits and safety interactions with the workforce, it is the Supervisor that is visible all day, every day. They are therefore in a unique position to influence outcomes and culture.

We expect Supervisors to...

- Understand safety systems and be responsible for the safe conduct of work by the workforce.
- Coach employees and ensure adherence to safety requirements.
- Maintain costs within budgets and be commercially aware.
- Manage work groups; build effective and productive teams.
- Develop and maintain customer relationships.
- Meet quality standards.
- Be computer literate and do the paperwork.
- Be technically competent.
- Plan and execute work on time and on budget.

...in a manner that is representative of the organisation’s culture.

The Current Reality

The Supervisor is a role that has no tangible ‘qualifications’. There are no formal pre-requisite training requirements in ‘supervisory skills’. It is a large, relatively mobile group, enjoying buoyant market conditions and ‘being in demand’. Often, people are put into these roles because they were a good tradesman.

Due to the requirement to have this group on the job, they are the layer within the organisation who receives the least investment in terms of training and development, yet they represent the company every day in relationships with the workforce and clients.

It is often assumed that “they are supervisors; they should know what to do”. Let’s take a closer look at the changing profile of this group.

Industry expectations and workforce skill level is driving the supervisor/employee ratio down from approximately 1:12 in 2006, to as low as 1:8 in 2008, within some industries (figure 1).

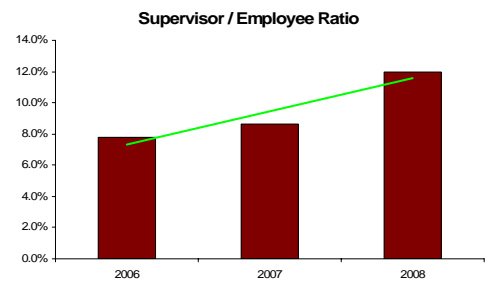


Figure 1

As a result of this and rapid business growth, there has been a significant increase in the number of Supervisor positions within Monadelphous. This has steadily increased from 169 in January 2006 to in excess of 400 in November 2007 (figure 2). Many of these positions were for shut-down work or large construction projects. Whilst all attempts are made to provide continuity of employment, the nature of this type of work means that a number of supervisors will move from one project; one employer, to another.

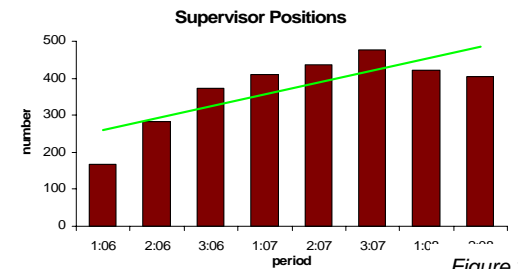
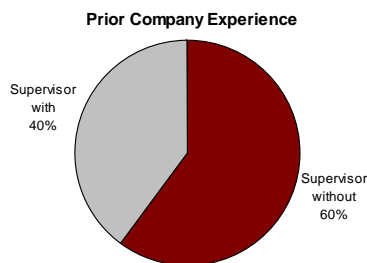


Figure 2



Over the past year, 60% of supervisors recruited into Monadelphous had not worked with Monadelphous previously (figure 3). As a result, many Supervisory candidates for projects and shutdowns are not known to us, with their only qualification being experience on a CV and the word of their referees. Approximately 25% of Supervisors were promoted internally into these roles.

Long term Supervisors often question the benefit of entering into staff contracts. As a result they behave like EBA employees – keeping one foot in that camp. Although on paper they are ‘frontline’ managers, they feel separated from the senior management team. They are no longer blue collar – but they do not consider themselves a part of the white collar group - they are “grey collar” employees. Only 14% of Supervisors within Monadelphous in 2007, were ‘staff’ (figure 4).



Figure 4

The Impact on Safety

It is common practice in shutdown and project work to recruit supervisors, give them the standard safety induction and put them to work. In consideration of this, using a previous shut-down experience as an example, a number of core Monadelphous Supervisors were a part of the team. It was assumed that these Supervisors would drive the Monadelphous safety culture through the workforce and lead those Supervisors who had not worked with the company previously, to do things “the Monadelphous way”. However, we failed to clearly articulate these expectations and to provide essential leadership skills to enable these to be met. As a result, this Supervisory group developed their own culture – one which was not consistent with that of the organisation. This became evident through the following:

- JHA’s were generic.
- Hazard Identification was not demonstrated as an essential job step.
- Leading Indicator Program targets were not met.
- Issues were experienced with employee and client relationships.
- Commercial issues were experienced.
- The workforce experienced incidents.

Monadelphous has a documented safety policy and a robust safety management system with numerous procedures and safe work practices, so how can this group influence safety performance so much?

Organisational culture has been defined as a “system of shared meaning” (Robbins et al. 2001). It is the sum of employee views, attitudes and beliefs; it is the organisation. Culture includes a set of beliefs, code of behaviour, ethical and performance standards (Carnall, 2003). It defines boundaries for what people should do and say; it shapes attitudes and behaviours. A strong culture is one where core values are widely shared throughout the organisation and people have a clear understanding of what is required; a clear sense of common objectives. A strong culture generates commitment to something larger than individual self interests and has the greatest influence on behaviour. Organisations with a strong culture are often more effective, productive and satisfying places to work. All of which have a direct impact on safety performance.

Culture is not defined within a procedure. It is learned through what people say and do. Through the language that is used and rituals or repeated actions that express the ‘real’ key values of an organisation (ie. which goal is most important). For example, if a Manager repeatedly asks about the schedule, even though a policy may state that safety comes first, this action portrays that getting the job done as quickly as possible is really what is most important. The workforce looks to the Leaders within an organisation for these unwritten rules and tolerances; of the accepted ‘way things are done around here’.

We consider Monadelphous to have a strong safety culture which is portrayed by a very stable Senior Management team. As stated previously, although Senior Managers conduct frequent site visits and safety interactions, it is the Supervisory group that is visible all day, every day. They therefore, will have a stronger influence on the safety culture that develops.

Using the previous shut-down example, 40% of Supervisors had previous experience of the Monadelphous culture. The remaining 60% of transient Supervisors had experience with a number of organisations. In the absence of clear expectations and information, these Supervisors have a tendency to work the way in which they are most comfortable; bringing in processes and behaviour that is reflective of cultures learnt from other organisations. If we agree that Supervisors have a strong influence over safety culture, how can we maintain our culture with so few who currently embrace it?

Leadership may be defined as the ability to inspire others and align them to a common vision. A Leader is “a person who consistently influences and develops individuals and teams to achieve goals” (Robbins et al, 2001). A large group of leaders is not needed to influence others and to drive a culture. History provides us with many examples of individuals who were recognised as strong and influential leaders (eg. Martin Luther-King, the Dalai Lama etc.). To ensure that we maintain our safety culture, it is essential that we clearly define expectations of Supervisors, provide them with core knowledge and skills, and develop strong leadership abilities.

The Challenge – Developing Supervisors into Leaders

An Executive Development Program and a Leadership Development Program for Managers have been in place within Monadelphous for a number of years. A nationally accredited, minimum training standard for Supervisors was implemented approximately 4 years ago (ie. module 8 from the diploma of Frontline Management). This training course had been customised to the Monadelphous HSE management system and is delivered by an external Registered Training Organisation. A proportion of Supervisors have completed the Frontline Management diploma.

The provision of this minimum competency standard for Supervisors did produce positive outcomes, such as the following:

- A reduction in incident rate (LTIFR & TCIFR).
- Introduction to basic leadership skills and understanding of its impact on safety performance.
- Consistent knowledge in regards to basic safety management requirements amongst long term Supervisors.

However, the following gaps soon became evident:

- Training did not address other core competencies considered essential to be an effective Supervisor (eg. communication, people management, computer skills etc.).
- Transient Supervisors may not participate in the training (Supervisors were required to complete the training within 6 months).

- Different trainers would emphasis different aspects of the course, depending on their experience and comfort. What it meant to be a Supervisor within Monadelphous became lost. External trainers were unable to portray the Monadelphous culture as they were not immersed within it.
- Rapid expansion and recruitment meant training was unable to be provided prior to project/shut-down start-up, to capture all Supervisors.

Although formal, external training has a place in skills development; it would never be able to deliver everything that was desired to effectively raise Supervisor competency and instil our safety culture – of what it means to do things “the Monadelphous way”. It became evident that the best way to achieve this was to implement our own Supervisor Leadership Development and Training Program.

Supervisor Leadership Development Program

The purpose of the Supervisors Leadership Development Program is as follows:

- To provide a structured framework and united approach to Supervisor development across all disciplines.
- To clearly articulate expectations of a Supervisor within Monadelphous.
- To provide a short term development plan and a long term career development plan as incentive for Supervisory staff.
- To provide another component in the overall staff retention strategy.
- To provide tools to be used in conjunction with the Monadelphous Performance Management System, targeting professional development of supervisory levels (this previously had only been utilised for “staff” positions).
- To provide a systematic approach to the identification of Supervisory training needs.
- To provide employees with a commitment from Monadelphous for the provision of professional development for Supervisory roles.
- To provide a direct link to the Leaders within the organisation.

The Program is comprised of a Leadership Capability Framework and a series of Training Modules.

Leadership Capability Framework

The leadership capability framework was championed by a Superintendent within our Gladstone Operation. It involved extensive consultation with a cross section of management and supervisory personnel to ensure that it accurately captured expectations and real life scenarios. The framework clearly defines 3 levels of Supervisor and provides a series of tools to analyse supervisory skills which lead to the development of training and development plans, based on the three key steps below (figure 5). A Users Guide provides a step by step overview of the system and how it is to be applied.

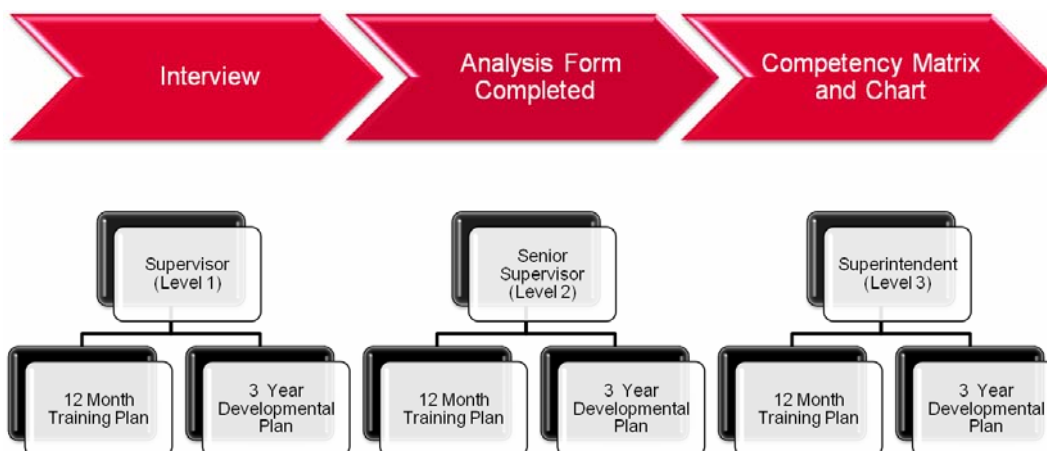


Figure 5

Step 1: Interview Process and Tools:

The process begins with an interview to identify a Supervisors current level of leadership competency. This can be performed individually or through consultation with others to provide 360 degrees of feedback. A Supervisor Role Overview tool (figure 6) provides clear definition of three Supervisory levels (ie. Supervisor, Senior Supervisor, Superintendent). Levels are not based on years of experience, but rather on skills, knowledge and competency. They identify realistic expectations, as not everyone will perform to a higher standard as soon as they are provided with the title of Supervisor. This tool outlines the function, responsibilities, accountabilities and operating sphere for each of the 3 Supervisor levels and is used to determine the appropriate level at which an interviewee is to be assessed.

Descriptors	Supervisor	Senior Supervisor	Superintendent
Function	To facilitate quality output within an environment of 'Safety'. Completion of allocated projects within accepted human, material and financial resource planning frameworks.	To ensure the output of a quality product within an environment of 'Safety'. Actively manages the completion of projects within accepted human, material and financial resource planning frameworks	Strategically and pro-actively manage the completion of projects within accepted human, material and financial resource planning frameworks and within an environment of 'Safety'
	Acts as a conduit between Monadelphous Operations and the Customer.	Builds relationships between Monadelphous Operations and the Customer. Recognises opportunities for new customer relationships	Strategically manages relationships between Monadelphous Operations and the Customer. Actively seeks new business opportunities.
	Identify project variations; formulate contingencies; offer solutions and refer to higher management	Investigate, define and document project variations. Implement solutions and refer to higher management when necessary	Manage the financial & legal implications of project variations in conjunction with higher management
Responsibility	Awareness of Contractual Obligations for the specific project	Actively manage contractual obligations, variations and client requests (changes)	Ensure that all contractual obligations (including variations) are met to the satisfaction of the client

Figure 6

Supervisory Handbooks have been developed for each Supervisory level. The Supervisory Handbook applicable to the level at which a person is to be assessed, is used during the interview process to identify current abilities. Each handbook addresses 9 core capabilities – safety, management, leadership, quality, organisational skills and planning, customer relations, cultural fit and attitude, technical competency and computer skills. Each core capability is further divided into competencies (eg, safety competencies include understanding safety management systems, duty of care, risk management, Job Hazard Analyses, Toolbox and Pre-start meetings, incident investigations.) Each competency is defined by behavioural characteristics and knowledge, skills & abilities skill set, applicable to each level of Supervisor.

Step 2: Leadership Analysis Process and Tools

Within the interview process, a Leadership Analysis Tool is completed with the Supervisor, using the handbooks as a reference. This tool documents whether a learning opportunity, proficiency or personal strength has been identified for each competency (figure 7). If personal strengths are being documented for each competency – the handbook for the next level up may be used. Conversely, if mostly development opportunities are being identified, the handbook for a lower supervisor level may be more appropriate. Competencies that are deemed 'development opportunities' will form the basis of Training & Development Plans.

	Development Opportunity	Proficiency	Personal Strength
Safety			
Understand Monadelphous Safety Systems <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Knowledge and understanding of ME safety systems and how to access forms and procedures 			
Apply Risk Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conduct risk assessments, complete risk register and apply hierarchy of control to corrective actions 			
Ability to complete JHA <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Compulsory understanding to complete and review a 			

JHA			
Incident Investigation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete incident investigation forms, provide detailed explanation, provide recommendations 		
Pre-Start Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidently deliver meeting agenda, respond to queries and provide clear instructions 		
Tool Box Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confidently deliver meeting agenda, respond to queries and provide clear instructions 		
Duty of Care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Proactively manages and measures Duty of Care, advises employee to ensure his/her adherence 		

Figure 7

Step 3: Training and Development Plans

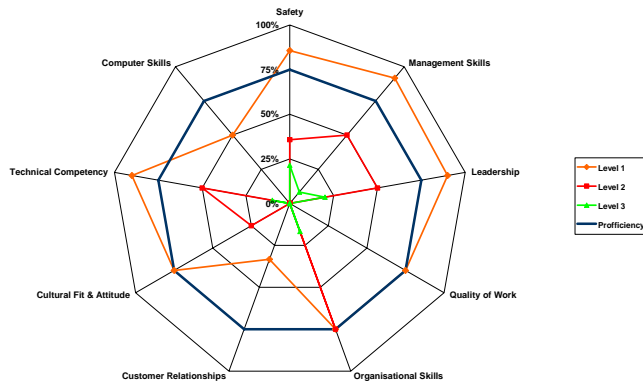
Information from the leadership analysis form is entered into a Competency Matrix (figure 8). This enables a graphic representation of strengths and opportunities to be created. The resultant spider graph (figure 9) provides a visual feel for Supervisors to see their current performance level and can be used as a basis for comparison, to track and inspire progress towards their goal.

Requirement	Level 1	Level 2			Level 3			Proficiency		
		Development Opportunity	Proficient	Performance Strength	Development Opportunity	Proficient	Performance Strength	Development Opportunity	Proficient	Performance Strength
Safety										
Understand Monadelphous Engineering Safety Systems	Awareness of SWP, JHA, incident forms, duty of care			✓			✓			✓
Risk Management	Awareness of risk management systems			✓			✓			✓
Ability to Complete JHA (Job Hazard Analysis)	Compulsory understanding to complete and review a JHA			✓			✓			✓
Incident Investigation	Complete incident investigation form with assistance of QS			✓			✓			✓
Conduct Pre-start Meetings - Daily	Assist GS to deliver pre-start meeting			✓			✓			✓
Conduct Tool Box Meetings - fortnightly	Assist GS to deliver tool box meeting			✓			✓			✓
Obligation (Duty of Care)	Understands responsibilities of employees and employers			✓			✓			✓
Management Skills										

Figure 8

Competency Levels

Figure 9



A 12-Month Training Plan is then developed to prioritise short term professional development goals that are generated through the interview process and upon completion of the leadership analysis form. The training plan identifies both formal and informal development opportunities and results in an action plan to ensure training needs are met.

A 3-Year Development Plan is then agreed, to provide more strategic professional development and assist in career management. Follow up meetings are scheduled every 6-months to review progress.

The Training Program – a Unique Approach

A group of Senior Managers within Maintenance and Industrial Services reviewed the ongoing effectiveness of the current supervisor safety training and traditional training programs in general. They identified that the most effective way for Supervisors to gain an understanding of the organisations culture and expectations and to demonstrate desired leadership skills was for the training to be delivered by the Leaders themselves. Training would be focused, consistent, practical and allow for reinforcement over time.

With reference to the Leadership Capability Framework, 12 training modules were identified to address core supervisory competencies specific to the Monadelphous culture and management systems. These include the following:

- The Monadelphous Way (culture).
- Leadership.
- Communication.
- Developing Effective Teams.
- Monadelphous Safety (2 modules).
- Problem Solving and Decision Making.
- Time Management; Effective Team Meetings.
- Monadelphous People Systems.
- Monadelphous Operational Performance.
- Monadelphous Financial Performance.
- Basic Computer Skills.

A modularised training program was developed with the assistance of subject experts. Each module is to be delivered by a Senior Manager supported by subject experts where required. Previously, 2 types of Supervisors had been identified within Monadelphous – long term Supervisors and transient Supervisors for shut-down / project work. Therefore, a “one size fits all” approach to training would not be effective.

The Training “fit” for Long Term Supervisors:

- Modules are held every 4-6 weeks over a 12 month rotational basis. This ensures the provision of focused, ‘small chunks’ of information delivered over time (which is often more effective than 2 days of ‘death by PowerPoint’, where retention rates may reach ~20%).
- Practical, modularised delivery provides participants with the time and support to transpose learning from a class room set up into the work environment. It allows for feedback and reinforcement of learning’s at the next session.
- The rotational nature of the program means that a new Supervisor can participate in the following training session, they do not need to wait for it to recommence from module 1.
- It provided for face to face sessions with the leadership group, in a forum where they can pass on their skills and knowledge.

The Training “fit” for Transient Supervisors:

- This program is currently under development. It utilises the leadership handbooks to identify core Supervisory competencies applicable for the successful execution of a scope of work.
- Information from the modules above will form the basis of this training.
- It will address key leadership competencies and supervisory tools.
- It is likely to take the form of a targeted 1-2 day induction with direct senior management involvement.
- A safety leading indicator program will be incorporated into shut-down work to focus Supervisor attention on proactive actions to prevent incident occurrence. Leading key performance indicators (KPI’s) have been found more effective in delivering desired behaviours, as apposed to a focus on lagging KPI’s (eg. incident rate targets).

A group of core Supervisors, with experience within the Monadelphous culture and systems, will still be an integral part of shut-down and project teams. The difference however will be, that they have undergone the long term supervisor development program – they will therefore be empowered and have stronger leadership skills to be more able to act as change agents and coach supervisors who are new to the organisation – they will be in a stronger position to influence the safety culture.

This approach was trialled at a recent shut-down, where only 35% of Supervisors had previously worked for Monadelphous. Only the first 6 modules were able to be completed within the lead up timeframe. Despite this, the training appeared to have significant impact at the work front. Improved team work and communication were noted amongst the Supervisor group and between work groups, compliance with safety systems was high, behaviours were more consistent with the Monadelphous culture, with safety as a priority being evident. A significant improvement in leading indicator score (by 30%) and a reduction in incident frequency rates (TCIFR reduced by 58%), compared to pre-shut-down, were noted.

Additional Benefits

Further to those already highlighted, additional benefits of the Leadership Development Framework include the following:

- It is suitable for multiple disciplines (ie. not trade specific).
- It is transferable. Supervisors can move across the country and to different locations with Monadelphous and will be able to continue the program.
- It lends to the development of a “Mc Donald’s” approach. Clients will develop confidence that when working with Monadelphous in different locations, the same level of skill and service and the same culture will be experienced.
- It clearly defines roles and responsibilities. This assists with the recruitment and selection of new Supervisors and also provides a point of reference for people seeking to act in or apply for a higher role. It allows for self assessment.
- Supervisors enter into “individual contracts”. This encourages them to make the break from “blue collar” and begins the conscious transition into a “staff position”.
- Staff retention; as commitment by the organisation to a career path becomes evident.

The Process of Continuous Improvement

Although initial indicators have shown multiple benefits of this program, a number of key challenges remain. Not all Senior Managers are natural trainers; therefore the need to provide additional support for delivering group training is being considered. The level of detail within training plans and supporting documents is currently being improved to ensure consistency of delivery amongst Managers. Monadelphous is geographically spread, therefore involvement of the next tier of Managers and topic experts may be needed.

Further trialling of training modules for shut-down work has been scheduled. The challenge is to ensure that this remains targeted, practical and does not become “another safety induction”. A further trail of The Leadership Capability Framework and Training Program for long term Supervisors is currently underway. Following which, this will be progressively implemented across additional sites. A process of ongoing feedback and review will be in place to ensure that the Program delivers on expectations...a skilled, knowledgeable, competent and stable group of Frontline Leaders.