

Safe, Skilled and Productive Supervisors

Deb Jones

Manager - Program Delivery
Mining Industry Skills Centre

Introduction

Research completed during the development of the Mining Industry Skills Strategy 'Securing the Critical Capability: Towards a Holistic Skills Strategy for the Mining Industry' highlighted the critical need for highly skilled Supervisors, and the current challenges in addressing the ability to secure Supervisors at this level. These challenges included:

- Limited timeframe made available for Supervisor training;
- Limited coaching opportunities for new Supervisors;
- Shortage of personnel with the appropriate cross-section of skill sets or attributes;
- Lack of industry experience and exposure to environmental hazards; and
- Poor recruitment processes.

Lead by the Mining Industry Skills Centre, workshops were conducted with industry stakeholder groups to explore ways to address this issue. The most significant common thought from industry was:

"It does not matter how good a Supervisor training product is if the appropriate Supervisor recruitment, training, and coaching is neglected."

These workshops lead to the formation of the Supervisor Focus Group and the development of the Supervisor Framework.

The Impact of Supervisors

What does it mean to an organisation if Supervisors are under-skilled? A risk analysis was completed that highlighted the threats an organisation faces if there is not an adequate foundation for the employment and development of Supervisors. Critical risks were identified in the areas of safety and health, production, retention of staff, and workplace culture. This was confirmed by the research for the Skills Strategy that identified that ineffective Supervisors may cause:

- X Health and safety issues
- X Reduced productivity
- X Resentment towards management
- X High levels of absenteeism
- X Workplace conflict

Figure 1 illustrates the impact EFFECTIVE Supervisors can have on an organisation.



If an organisation has highly skilled Supervisors they can expect them to:

- ✓ Maintain and improve upon health and safety standards
- ✓ Motivate and energise their teams
- ✓ Make the difference between meeting production targets and missing them
- ✓ Have a significant impact on workplace culture
- ✓ Set the appropriate tone of behaviour and work
- ✓ Influence retention of staff
- ✓ Provide incentives for employment
- ✓ Disseminate key messages from management

Development of the Framework

In August 2008 the Supervisor Focus Group was formed. Using the information collated from the initial workshops, the Group began the development of a Supervisor Framework for the resources industry covering the recruitment, training, and coaching of Supervisors. This process was facilitated and supported by the Mining Industry Skills Centre. The following companies participated in the Supervisor Focus Group.

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|------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| ▪ BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance | ▪ Kagge Mining Solutions |
| ▪ Peabody | ▪ Arrow Energy NL |
| ▪ Downer Edi | ▪ Legra Mining Services |
| ▪ Walters | ▪ SMS Management & Technology |
| ▪ G&S Engineering | ▪ TQ Mining Services |
| ▪ Macarthur Coal | ▪ Torgas |
| ▪ Leighton Contractors | ▪ Axiom College |

The charter of the Group was to:

To provide the industry with a leading practice framework that provides the appropriate foundation to produce highly skilled Supervisors and Managers

The following diagram illustrates the elements that were identified as being essential to produce highly skilled, productive and safe Supervisors.



This diagram was used as a support tool in the development of the Supervisor Framework. The team worked from the premise that the recruitment and development of Supervisors requires a holistic approach, including an investment of time to plan and then implement the process. Training alone will not produce a highly skilled Supervisor.

Using the Framework developed by the Supervisors Focus Group to build the recruitment, training, and coaching of Supervisors will enable organisations to effectively grow their future Supervisors.

The robust Framework developed will enable an organisation to:

- Identify the required skill sets;
- Develop effective Supervisor recruitment processes;
- Evaluate an individual's current level of capability;
- Match the individual's capability to the current work level;
- Predict an individual's future growth potential;
- Create focussed developmental plans;
- Ensure effective training is delivered to identified Supervisors;

- Ensure training allows sufficient time to develop the appropriate behaviours and skill sets;
- Allow a new Supervisor to grow into the role;
- Establish a robust support and coaching culture; and
- Implement and utilise processes to monitor and measure the Supervisor’s effectiveness.

The Framework is divided into three sections:

Part A – Recruitment

Part B – Training

Part C – Workplace Coaching

Part A – Recruitment

The recruitment section of the Framework comprises two sections:

- Supervisor Skill Sets
- Recruitment Tool

The **Supervisor Skill Sets** tool is designed to provide organisations with a comprehensive list of the required skill sets for a Supervisor in the resource industry. Parts B and C of the Framework use these skill sets.

There are three **major** skill sets with **key** skill sets for each section.

Major Skill Sets	Key Skill Sub Sets
Personal and Interpersonal Skills	Win-Win Communication
	Adaptability
	Workplace Communication
	Conflict Management
	Natural Strengths
Technical, Professional and Operational Knowledge	Technical Knowledge
	Industry Experience
	Productivity Management
	Safety Awareness
	Planning and Organising
Leadership Behaviours and Practices	Organisational Culture
	Coaching
	People Management
	Leads and Develops Teams

	Decision Making
	Promotes and Implements Change
	Self Management
	Implements Improvements

The **Recruitment Tool** aligns to the Supervisor skill sets and can be used to:

- Identify the skill level of a candidate for Supervisor training;
- Determine if a candidate is suitable to progress to Leading Hand and/or Supervisor; and
- Identify progression in development.

The **Recruitment Tool** outlines a number of key attributes that are needed for supervisors to be effective in the identified skill sets. These are:

1. Determination to achieve
2. Motivational Fit
3. Teamwork
4. Operational Crew Management
5. Engagement Capability
6. Health & Safety Awareness

This tool is intended to be used to determine the performance level of the individual aligned to the attribute. For example a person may be a level 3 in Attribute 1, however in Attribute 4 they are assessed as being at a level 2. This will assist in the development of the person's individual development plan and where gap training and/or coaching may be required.

Part B – Training

The training section of the Framework comprises 3 sections:

- Skills Training and Coaching Guide
- Supervisor Development Pathway – Developmental Plan
- Supervisor Skill Sets and Competency Units

These tools will allow an organisation to work with their training department or Registered Training Organisation to proactively plan for an employee's development. All tools are based on the Supervisor's skill sets. This section contains the following documents.

The **Skills Training and Coaching Guide** outlines the stages required to progress from a Leading Hand to a Supervisor; and provides guidance on whether skills training, coaching, or both are required to achieve the desired skill sets.

This guide was created in response to the research evidence that there is very little support given to new Supervisors. This tool outlines the development that needs to occur in the workplace.

The **Development Plan** has been designed to assist both the initial planning and allow the progress of the supervisor's development to be followed. It includes identifying the initial skills gaps and how those skills will be gained. This tool provides a way to:

- Conduct a skills analysis on each skill set;
- Review development progress;
- Document learning strategies to be used; and
- Document evidence gathered to support learning and development and/or provide comment.

*The **Supervisor Skill Sets and Competency Units*** section maps accredited competencies to the key skills sets.

Part C – Workplace Coaching

The Workplace Coaching section of the Framework provides eight documents:

- Coach Types and Attributes of a Coach and Trainee
- Benefits and Components for Success
- Planning Tools 1 and 2
- Tips for Communication
- Tips for Toolbox Meetings
- Management Support for Supervisors
- Day in the Life of a Supervisor

In addition to information on coaching, there are tools managers and those being trained can use as prompts to assist them in their roles as managers of Supervisors and new Supervisors.

Piloting of Framework

The Framework was piloted by a number of organisations who provided feedback on the implementation of the whole or part of the Framework. The response was overwhelmingly positive and all Interviewees could see how the Framework would be very beneficial for the industry.

The feedback from the pilots lead to some significant improvements to the Framework in terms of applicability and usability.

A common thread emerging from the pilot studies is the need for commitment to getting this right.

Analysis of feedback highlighted that the implementation of this Framework will be flawed if the organisation's culture does not view employee development as a critical factor for business success. The majority of organisations involved in the pilot are

implementing the broader skill training aspect of Supervisor development but struggle to see how they can execute the coaching component of the Framework. Time and capability seem to be the major constraints.

It must be noted that there is no quick fix to ensuring the industry has leading practice training and coaching options to produce highly skilled Supervisors. It will take commitment from all levels of the organisation for this to happen.

Summary

Often an individual is identified as having the capability to work at a higher level, however, capability does not necessarily convert across to effective performance, particularly when required to supervise other workers. Having the necessary skills, knowledge, and experience is also essential when moving into a more complex work environment.

If the expected outcomes of effective supervision such as increased performance and effective health and safety management are to be realised, it is essential to target a potential supervisor's development. This development needs to ensure they acquire the essential skills, knowledge, and experience aligned to the position. For this to be achieved, an organisation requires a culture that proactively demonstrates employee development as a critical factor for success.

The Supervisor Framework provides a process and practical tools to guide this development for the Resources Industry.

A complete copy of the Supervisor Framework, including the tools, will be available on the Mining Industry Skills Centre website (www.miskillscentre.com.au) from October 2009.