

Supervising With The Personal Touch

Condensed from a lecture, by Mr. Sawada, Management Consultant Nagoya, Japan.

Toyota teaches its supervisors a management process that has proven to be very motivational for gemba, or the shop floor. Several elements are critical to the success of "Supervising With the Personal Touch," each one involving the empowerment of employees through supervisory activities and direction.

Communication

The first element is good communication between management and gemba; supervisory activities include:

- Holding meetings to explain management policies, making sure everyone understands the policies and how each person can contribute to them in a positive way.
- Holding follow-up meetings to make sure everyone in the shop is contributing to the management policies.
- Holding a daily "tool box meeting to make sure each person knows what the problems were last shift the plan for solving such problems, what new things are going to be introduced today, and what to look out for. This meeting is typically a lecture-type session with (Q&A at the end.
- Spending social time with employees ... going to breakfast or dinner with them, talking with them on a personal level, mailing birthday cards to them and their families ... in general, letting them understand that the supervisor cares about them and their well-being.
- Posting bulletin boards for employees so workers know what is happening and have a way to informally talk to others about things to buy or sell, etc. Using message cards to recognize employees who have done a good job.
- Posting story boards in the gemba so everyone knows the team's progress toward meeting its goals.
- Sending employees to outside meetings. Morale & Awareness Improvement. This element should be part of every action the supervisor takes.

Specific activities or policies may include:

- Supporting companywide campaigns such as TQC, TPM, 5S, Corporate Identity, etc.
- Allowing family members to periodically visit the plant.
- Providing the opportunity for family members to make suggestions about the workplace.
- Taking employees in the field to study how customers use products, how competition sells products, etc.
- Sending employees to meetings or exhibitions, such as QCD or similar sessions.
- Providing recognition for a job well done; providing awards for meeting or surpassing specific goals.

Paying Attention to Needs

The importance here is obvious. Actions may include:

- Providing transportation allowances and living allowances (built into the Toyota benefits package).
- Providing recreation facilities. This is often done by employees' pooling of savings certificates from their improvement suggestions to purchase such items as Ping-Pong tables, pool tables, etc.
- Providing sleeping facilities for employees who have to put in very long days.
- If possible, providing a flex time system for working hours.
- Allowing salespeople to go home directly from sales calls.
- Improving salaries and bonuses.
- Providing training opportunities.
- Providing a system for self-reporting to the boss when things are going right-or when they are going wrong.
- Providing for sabbaticals to study at universities or even overseas.
- Helping entrepreneurs start their own businesses.
- Sending someone to help the family of an ill worker.

Participative Management

Participation and teamwork by all employees is a key result of Personal Touch Supervision. Supervisors encourage such results by:

- Stressing group identity.
- Utilizing TQC methodologies.
- Doing as much consultation as possible on the subject of labor-management relations.
- Allowing labor to understand what the board of directors is doing.
- Providing for a flexible organization.
- Making sure cross-functional boundaries are broken down.
- Developing matrixed organizations for products.
- Encouraging small group activities.
- Providing for improved organizational development.
- Making work fun by putting people with common interests together.

Under this system, it is important for every supervisor to practice Personal Touch activities. It should be noted, however, that of the above listings, only about 80 percent of the items are actually practiced by any one Toyota supervisor. Another key element is that the Personal Touch system needs to be balanced with an ever-present sense that one should not infringe on people's private lives. The following Supervising With A Personal Touch is an important part of the concepts taught at KIA's Basics of KAIZEN 11 Seminar, which utilizes a model car assembly workshop to show how to establish standards.

In the workshops, participants assume roles at the gembu (shop floor) as workers, supervisors, and inspectors. Working as a team can be enjoyable, for workers and supervisors real-life example combines Personal Touch with KAIZEN concepts, as applied to the human resources side of the organization:

When one of his key employees began coming to work late, the supervisor met with the employee, asked him if he understood what effect his tardiness was having on his team and the workplace, and asked why he continued to come in late even though he understood such effects. The employee explained that his child had recently become asthmatic, having regular nighttime attacks which kept the parents up and caused the father to oversleep in the mornings. Upon questioning, he also explained that the asthma was apparently caused by their home's infestation by a small insect, which the family did not know how to get rid

of. So the supervisor investigated how to eradicate the insect, the employee followed the prescribed extermination procedures, and the asthma problem disappeared-the employee was able to get to work on time again.

The above example illustrated several activities of **Supervising With A Personal Touch**:

1. The supervisor realized the difficulty of maintaining quality first if employees have to be shuffled to accommodate one person's tardiness.
2. The result, tardiness at work, was attributed to a process which needed to be changed.
3. The employee was reminded of his responsibility to the system and as a critical member needed by the entire organization.
4. The supervisor was non-judgmental, letting the facts come out so the problem could be exposed and analyzed.
5. The supervisor "asked why five times" to determine the root cause of the problem.
6. The supervisor helped set a standard to prevent the problem from recurring.

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