Supervisor Secret: Leading Through Change

Leading the Charge Through Change

The only thing you can count on in today's workplace is change. Just when you get accustomed to one way of doing things, a new plan comes along.

The rapid advances in technology affect every workplace. From just-in-time delivery systems to better personal protective equipment, changes are always taking place.

As a supervisor, you often find yourself in the position of guiding your crew through changes. Here are some tips for making the transitions a little easier:

- **Stay alert.** Don't spread rumors, but pay attention to them.
- **Listen** to the people in management and in your work area. The sooner you know about intended changes, the better prepared you will be to deal with them.
- **Learn** as much as you can about the planned changes. Take advantage of any orientation or training sessions offered to you. Read up on the new equipment or system on your own. Stay on top of technological developments and other advances in your field.
- **Encourage** your workers to upgrade their education and training continually, so they can be prepared for the inevitable workplace changes they will experience.
- Once the particular changes are decided upon, **embrace** them enthusiastically. Commit yourself to the changeover.
- **Encourage** your crew to view the new systems optimistically. Changes need the support of everyone involved to be effective and easy.

No improvement can happen without change.

Encourage enthusiastic participation in the changes taking place in your work area. Try to involve workers in planning the changes,

and cultivate good communication.

- Give the workers as much information about the plan as far ahead of time as you can. Give them time to get used to the idea. It is important to explain the reasons for the change.
- Involve the workers in the planning process. They are much more likely to co-operate if they have a hand in deciding future developments.
- Introduce big changes gradually. Allow the workers to focus on one new thing at a time, but keep them aware of the big picture so they will know where they are going.
- Keep the lines of communication open as the changes are put into place. Frequently ask for feedback about problems and how to solve them.
- Watch for backsliding into old ways of doing things. Workers can be tempted to use old methods when no one is looking or when they are under pressure to meet a deadline.
- Celebrate milestones. Acknowledge the accomplishments of your workers in learning the new ways of working. Make sure the employees know how much you appreciate their efforts. It doesn’t hurt to point out these accomplishments to company management to help your workers get the recognition they deserve.
- After the change is in place, begin planning to deal with the next one.