



## The Frontline Supervisor

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*Helping You Manage Your Company's Most Valuable Resource – Employees*  
**Solutions Employee Assistance Program 1-800-526-3485**

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**Q** - *I've been a manager for several years and am trying to improve my skills. What are some traits that are important to be a good supervisor?*

**A** - Being a good supervisor can be a difficult role to fill. Some traits are ones you might have naturally but others you need to work on to develop. Following is a list that could be helpful for review:

Honest	Good communicator
Consistent	Avoids stereotypes
Fair	Isn't shy about going to HR for reality check
Respectful	Responsive
Good listener	

Be knowledgeable about policies on equal employment and harassment, and knows their role in adhering to and promoting these policies.

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**Q** - *Our organization will lose nearly 15 percent of its employees in a planned downsizing this year. Should I anticipate that productivity will be negatively affected, and if so, is there anything I can do about it? Will employees simply not care about productivity this year?*

**A** - Anger and anxiety will play powerful roles and may affect some employees' productivity as they seek to cope with the uncertainty of downsizing. Many supervisors assume that all employees will suffer a lack of productivity when downsizing looms and anxiety grows, but this is not necessarily the case. Productivity may increase for some employees. These will tend to be employees who have a high level of insecurity about their positions but who also have a high need to work. In other words, those who can afford to lose their jobs the least may demonstrate more productivity than usual. On the other hand, downsizing anxiety may adversely affect the productivity of employees who have a low need to work. Offering support and effectively planning communication as downsizing is implemented is important for both groups, regardless of anticipated productivity levels, because the personal reaction of each employee cannot be predicted or generalized to a larger group.

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**Look for Solutions on-line: [www.solutions-eap.com](http://www.solutions-eap.com)**

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**Q - *I believe my primary job as a supervisor is to manage my resources – namely my staff. Something doesn't seem to be working and I wonder if I've missed something.***

**A -** Understanding the difference between managing and leading is important. The following is an article which you may find helpful.

**Tips for Effective Leadership: Don't Manage People Wolf J. Rinke**

Is your organization striving to create better managers? Or are you striving to create better leaders? Are they one in the same? Before you answer these questions, consider this point: You manage things; you lead people.

Most people crave to be led -- but don't want to be managed. If on top of that they can be involved in a worthy cause, be part of a winning team, feel great about the person they report to, and feel great about themselves, they are literally in work heaven.

With the focus now in creating better leaders, the next question is: How? I believe that becoming a more effective leader depends on one's ability to look at current situations from different angles, to apply a new mode of thinking, to challenge the norm, to look at what others are doing and do something different.

To illustrate my point, the following chart highlights the differences between management and Contrarian Leadership:

Managers rely on the "tried and true" vs. Contrarian Leaders that experiment with Contrarian approaches. Following this pattern, the characteristics of the two, contrasted, are:

\*Maintain vs. Develop

\*Control vs. Trust

\*Administer vs. Innovate

\*Rely on position power vs. Empower

\*Cope with complexity vs. Embrace change

\*Focus on the bottom line vs. Focus on employee and customer satisfaction

\*Direct vs. Inspire

\*Strategy driven vs. Philosophy driven

\*Structure/system focus vs. People focus

\*Do things right vs. Do the right things right

As this list shows, the qualities that Contrarian leaders embody enable them to instill within their organization an entrepreneurial, empowered culture that gives employees the license to act.

**Dr. Wolf Rinke is president and founder of Wolf Rinke Assoc, Inc. and author of Don't Oil the Squeaky Wheel.**

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**Q - *What is the key issue in leadership often overlooked by supervisors that can undermine their attempt to achieve workplace goals and build a cohesive team?***

**A -** A key leadership skill is identifying the skills and talents of employees and motivating them to use those skills in the pursuit of organizational goals. Effective leaders invest in developing constructive working relationships with their employees, and they help them apply their talents in the pursuit of those goals. Behaviors that demonstrate effective leadership skills are both learned and naturally part of some supervisors' personalities, but the investment by the leader in authentically meeting the needs of the team is what promotes loyalty and motivates followers (employees). The payoff for effective leadership is acquiring influence. Many supervisors reverse this process or miss part of it in their pursuit of becoming a leader. They focus more, or too much on, achieving goals, while neglecting the needs of employees on whom they rely. Leaders will not generate loyalty without also developing meaningful relationships with the employees they supervise.