



Improving Behaviors and Transforming Performance Through Frontline Leaders

Is your organization struggling with operational and financial performance during the new normal? Are you challenged with keeping your team focused and open to embracing change to meet evolving market needs? Now more than ever, connecting with employees and keeping them engaged are paramount for an organization to stay agile, customer focused and productive.

For most workers, frontline leaders are their primary connection to the company and they play a significant role in setting the tone for the culture. These managers interact with employees daily, and their actions and lack thereof can be the difference in an organization's ability to adapt, innovate and thrive - especially in times of rapid change.

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The challenges of transitioning to leader

While frontline leaders have the most impact on employees, traditionally they have had the least amount of development compared to other managers in an organization. Often, frontline supervisors have excelled technically and were promoted based on this performance. They are now charged with meeting performance goals and building employee skills through coaching and mentoring. Yet, they frequently lack the roadmap, resources and soft skills to do this effectively. Additionally, as these frontline leaders advance to a supervisory role, their days get overscheduled with too many meetings, too much time on computers, and not enough time in the field.

In some workplaces, burn out and turnover among this group and their teams can be rampant. There may be a lack of governance for frontline leadership development, and no formal coaching or mentoring program to build capability.

Often, frontline leadership development training is theoretical and competency based, lacking in real-world application and context to make learning relevant and lasting. Supervisors are expected to translate what happened in the classroom to real-life situations. More times than not, this doesn't take place.

The DSS approach to developing frontline leaders: a continuous, application-based system

Our more than 200 years of operational experience at DSS facilities and at client worksites have proven that the most sustainable, impactful frontline leadership development initiatives embed job-specific learning tools, and resources within existing safety and operational processes to develop skills in real time, in the real world.

Examples of this include teaching supervisors how to: observe workers and provide actionable feedback; initiate difficult conversations; and prioritize work within a defined timeline. Core value contacts, goal setting and project reviews, life-saving rules verification and incident response and investigations are frontline leader responsibilities that offer opportunities to build capability and competencies in the flow of work. This systemic approach - combined with coaching - provides a continuous development cycle as opposed to stand-alone one-off training events. Practical, application-based learning has proven to equip frontline supervisors with sustainable skills and confidence to lead successfully.

Frontline leaders are in the best position to impact an organization when it comes to changing mindsets and behaviors and strengthening culture. In many cases, they need support in developing the right attitudes and skills to talk to their employees about soft topics such as trust or communication. By implementing a blended approach to development that includes real-life exercises and ongoing feedback, leaders can quickly acquire the right skill set to communicate effectively, be more influential and help enrich workplace culture.

The most successful organizations prioritize frontline leadership development as a core operational leadership responsibility and require a comprehensive approach including:

- Governance (communications, metrics, implementation support and barrier removal)
- Integration with the Performance Management System
- Application-based context within existing operational processes
- Field verification of skill development
- Dynamic coaching
- Technology-enabled delivery, reinforcement and leading activity tracking
- Sustainability tools.

Delivering a lasting impact

To ensure a progressive, sustainable transformation program, it is essential to identify up front with top leadership the critical business outcomes, to create a sense of urgency, to mobilize key stakeholders, and to provide continual learning experiences complemented by coaching and feedback. Our leadership development program is based on adult learning principles and offers a flexible ecosystem of content, blended delivery formats and services to enable organizations to design personalized development journeys that meet the unique needs of their diverse teams.

Building sustainable value means that frontline leaders need both theoretical competency and practical knowledge that are reinforced over time as leaders mature into their roles. To continue the development journey, in-depth on-the-job coaching reinforces the principles introduced in structured learning modules and allows leaders to practice and refine the tools during their daily work. DSS coaches have extensive experience in real-world operations and in coaching frontline leaders to achieve transformational results.

The DSS approach to leadership development has been successful at numerous organizations, regardless of industry or region. Companies have benefited from improved behaviors, better decision-making processes, more effective performance management and increased operational efficiency.

DSS remains committed to collaborating with clients on the shop floor to build capability and to address real-life issues in the moment of need. By doing so, we empower frontline leaders to create competitive advantage by engaging their teams, accelerating innovation, and maximizing value for clients – and their organization.

Improving your bottom line

Equipping your frontline leaders with the skills to adapt and succeed, benefits your employees and your bottom line. Research has proven that organizations that engage, develop and value their people achieve improved operational efficiencies and stronger financial performance – while enhancing their company reputation.

24% higher profit margins can be attained by companies who invest in training (Source: The Huffington Post).

94% of employees would stay at an organization longer if it invested in career development (Source: LinkedIn Report).

Effective leadership matters now more than ever, and investing in your frontline supervisors is critical to helping your organization evolve and prosper in this dynamic environment.

Phone: 800-861-7668

Email: info@training.consultdss.com

Website: www.dsslearning.com



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