

Creating and Supporting a Qualified and Productive Workforce

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At Ward and Smith, P.A. we recognize that people are our most important resource for sustaining excellent service, and we encourage employees to make a lifelong commitment to learning and self-development.

Three years ago, we identified an exciting opportunity to offer leadership training to our administrative supervisors. Our assessment was that many of our supervisors had been asked to assume supervisory responsibilities based on their experience and technical proficiency, but had

been given the important role of supervising employees without the benefit of the specialized supervision training and education needed to succeed. In other words, we recognized that a supervisor's success depends on "growing" employees as well as personal competence—while a supervisor needs the skills and knowledge to personally accomplish an objective, supervision also requires the separate ability to work through others to achieve the objective.

A supervisor also affects employee performance and satisfaction, productivity, efficiency, turnover, and the overall health of any organization. We wanted to provide our supervisors with tools for their supervision toolbox; leadership training that highlighted effective supervision and the practical skills needed to succeed.

Training takes time, energy, and resources, which is why most organizations find it hard to invest in it. The United States Bureau of Labor Statistics recently found that employers with 100-500 employees provide only six minutes of training every six months. At Ward and Smith, we wanted a cost effective, time sensitive format to provide our administrative supervisors access to as many interactive training sessions as possible. The training also had to help reinforce and develop the skills and knowledge needed to be a successful leader. The solution was a Lunch and Learn series, with monthly training sessions announced well in advance, video conferencing available for employees working from remote locations, and lunch provided to all attendees. Each session was structured to provide a succinct and productive learning experience.

Our latest supervisor training session, *Emotional Intelligence - Developing Strong People Skills*, may have been our most popular yet. Emotional Intelligence is defined as "the ability to identify and manage your emotions and the emotions of others." Emotional Intelligence is all about people skills—if a supervisor can relate to people better and have or develop great people skills, then the supervisor will have better relationships.

Emotional Intelligence is comprised of four characteristics: self-awareness, self-regulation, social awareness, and relationship management.

1. **Self-Awareness** - The ability to accurately perceive the supervisor's emotions and stay aware of them as they happen.

2. **Self-Regulation** - The ability to use awareness of the supervisor's emotions to stay flexible and positively direct their own behavior.
3. **Social Awareness (Empathy)** - The ability to recognize the feelings of others, even when those feelings may not be obvious.
4. **Relationship Management** - The ability to develop and maintain good relationships, communicate clearly, inspire and influence others, work well in a team, and manage conflict.

Supervisors do not have to be born with a high level of Emotional Intelligence; it can be learned and developed. Our training focused upon the importance of supervisors knowing their own emotions and also developing the ability to assess situations through the eyes of the employee.

To develop good emotional intelligence, supervisors should focus on communicating with their team—not just through email, but by having face-to-face interactions. Beyond just practicing, a supervisor must learn from experience. The supervisor must take time after an interaction to process what was said and think about how the other person reacted to the communication. Over time, the supervisor will learn how people react to different ways of communication and can then adjust to get better results from each member of their team (and that's the real power of Emotional Intelligence!).

Better emotional intelligence creates better leaders who are well poised to enhance the ultimate objective of providing a great work product.

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