

Growers in various commodity sectors have adapted the above job description/specification for their own operations. While supervisory jobs vary both between and within industry sectors, their fundamental place in any organization makes them more similar than different. Probably most common among supervisory qualifications is an ability to communicate well with people and build interpersonal relationships conducive to honest exchange.

In the description on pages 111-112, the job specification (list of human attributes needed to perform the job) is compatible with the job content emphasis. Among the 22 knowledge, ability, and skill qualifications, 12 are closely related to the capacity for effective communication. A Spanish version of the description is available at *AgHelpWanted.org*.

When supervisors appear stressed, it should be no surprise. Their jobs are extremely demanding. They have to know how to supervise, how to operate, and when to do each. To be effective, a first-line supervisor has to deal well with a variety of people, information, and tangible items such as equipment, tools, supplies, and products.

Views of Good Supervision

In *Keeping the People Who Keep You in Business*, Leigh Branham stresses that employees respond to how well managers perform in developing workers and relationships. They informally evaluate their supervisors on the following behaviors:

- Provides a thorough introduction to the job for me and other newcomers
- Teaches specific job-related or technical skills
- Makes sure I have specific goals in key performance areas
- Assigns work so that I am able to use my skills
- Communicates to me the formal and informal realities of advancement here
- Makes sure I have opportunities to learn and develop
- Gives me feedback and guides me on how to improve my performance
- Provides opportunities to discuss performance problems
- Asks for my opinion on pending decisions
- Represents my interests and concerns to higher management

Most growers, hired managers, and workers have their own notions, which are consistent with Branham's, of what makes a good supervisor. According to one orchard manager, a good supervisor:

- Is assertive – gets started on his or her own
- Is organized – sets up and keeps to a daily schedule
- Leads – adapts style to get the job done with others

***Most important for
a good supervisor is
the ability to
communicate well.***

- Motivates – acts as a “positive” coach
- Takes the initiative – makes own decisions

Field workers have described good supervisors as people who:

- Are on top of their jobs.
- Command respect because of their experience.
- Have the ability to “put on workers’ shoes” and understand our problems.
- Treat us fairly and don’t play favorites.
- Stay on an even keel personally and don’t take their problems out on us.
- Have a lot of patience and trust us.
- Are sincerely interested in us and in our learning.
- Are firm but supportive and considerate on the job.

After reflecting on what works for them, supervisors have offered the following tips for success:

- Figure out and tell employees what you really expect of them
- Let workers know how they are doing
- Make the best of each person’s ability
- Never stand in another person’s way
- Look for untapped ability in each employee
- Point out ways to improve
- Give credit when and where it is due
- Look for unusually good performance and call attention to it
- Tell people in advance about changes that will affect them
- Explain why changes are to be made
- Find out and deal reasonably with any objections to a change
- Remember that employees have to balance work, family, and other personal interests
- Follow the golden rule: treat employees as you would like to be treated

