

KITCHEN MANAGEMENT / SUPERVISION

The organisation under different industries varies according to their specific requirements and the names given to people doing similar jobs may also vary. Some companies or organisations will require operatives, technicians, technologists, others need crafts people, supervisors and managers. The supervisory function of the technicians, chef de partie or supervisor may be similar.

The hospitality and catering industry is made up of people with craft skills. The craft person is involved with food production, the chef de partie may be the supervisor, supervising a section or sections of the food production system. The head chef will have both managerial and supervisory skills and he/she will determine the kitchen policies.

Supervisors are involved with the successful deployment of money, material and people. The primary role of the supervisor is to ensure that a group of people work together to achieve the goals set by the business. Managing physical and human resources to achieve customer service goals requires planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling.

Supervisors and head chefs need to motivate people, to persuade them to act in certain ways. In the kitchen / restaurant as in any other department staff must first be motivated to follow procedures. This can be done in a positive way by offering rewards, or in a negative way in the catering staff who do not comply with requirements. Both methods can be effective and can be used by supervisors to achieve their goals. One of the most effective ways is for a supervisor to build a team and offer incentives for good performance. However, staff can become indifferent to repeated schemes such as “employee of the month”. A good supervisor will attempt to introduce novelty and fun into the reward system.

The objective of Kitchen Management is to lead, organize and control the means of production and service of food. The catering establishments policy should be interpreted to the best of advantage, whether they are concerned by being an establishment of repute or to earn a good profit. To manage the kitchen, the Kitchen Manager/Chef de Cuisine should have a sound practical knowledge and should have the ability to organize labour, delegate the responsibility to appropriate staff who communicate well. The maintenance and cleaning of the machines is his responsibility. Labour saving, automatic machines are replacing the manually operated ones. The persons handling the machines should be able to follow the correct procedure for assembling, use and cleaning. Safety precautions have to be observed such as (a) Gas pilot lights must be lit before turning on the main Jet; (b) The liquids should never be stored above eye level; (c) The pot handles slicking out should never be placed over the edges of the stove or sides of the tables; (d) Sprinkle flour on hot lids and pans; (e) If fat or liquid is spilt on the floor, it should be cleaned and salt sprinkled on top immediately; (f) Hot in lures should not be carried; (g) Knives if carried should point downwards; (h) Sharp instruments should never be left in sinks. Controlling of labour needs great care and ability, their comfort, skill, work and welfare has to be seen to, A strict disciplinarian is respected by many, provided he has a good Judgement in dealing with matters and understands people. A good management will see that food cost is controlled and the people working in the kitchen are content in their jobs and the work given is comparable with their ability. Staff should be trained on the Job and if the performance is good, incentives, increments or promotions should be given, if need be. Certain factors such as budgetary control, portion control, cost control, proper purchasing, control of production and service, control of waste, etc. play an Important part in managing the kitchen. Proper layout of work areas in the kitchen contribute to a successful catering establishment which will not only satisfy customers but also the staff will be contented. Cramped and lack of proper kitchens delay food preparation and service. Certain points have to be kept in view before planning such as the types of meals to be served, number of persons to be served, forecast of peak period, ventilation, proper drainage, etc. It is important that the kitchen should be close to the restaurant to facilitate efficient service, a work plan identifies the precise steps for the task type of food to be prepared and served, number and size of portions, time taken for food service, method of food service and presentation, location for food service, e. g. banquet room, dining-room.

SUPERVISORY FUNCTION

Certain leadership qualities are needed to enable the supervisor to carry out his or her role effectively. These qualities include the ability to:

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| ☉ Communicate | ☉ Initiate | ☉ Make decision |
| ☉ Co-ordinate | ☉ Mediate | ☉ Motivate |
| ☉ Inspire | ☉ Organise | |

Those under supervision should expect from the supervisor:

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| ☉ Consideration | ☉ Understanding |
| ☉ Respect | ☉ Consistency |

And in return the supervisor can expect:

- ☉ Loyalty
- ☉ Respect
- ☉ Co-operation

The good supervisor is able to obtain the best from those for whom he or she has responsibility and can also completely satisfy the management of the establishment that a good job is being done.

The job of the supervisor is essentially to be an overseer. In the catering industry the name given to the supervisor may vary - sous-chef, chef de partie, kitchen supervisor or section chef. In hospital catering the name would be sous-chef, chef de partie or kitchen supervisor. The kitchen supervisor will be responsible to the catering manager, while in hotels and restaurants the chef de parties will be responsible to the head chef. The exact details of the job will vary according to the different areas of the industry and the size of the various units, but generally the supervisory role involves three functions: technical; administrative; social.

TECHNICAL FUNCTION

Culinary skills and the ability to use kitchen equipment are essential for the kitchen supervisor. Most kitchen supervisors will have worked their way up through the section or sections before reaching supervisory responsibility. The supervisor needs to be able 'to do' as well as knowing 'what to do' and 'how to do it'. It is also necessary to be able to do it well and to be able to impart some of these skills to others.

ADMINISTRATIVE FUNCTION

The supervisor or chef de partie will, in many kitchens, be involved with the menu planning, sometimes with complete responsibility for the whole menu but more usually for part of the menu, as happens with the larder chef and pastry chef. This includes the ordering of foodstuffs (which is an important aspect of the supervisor's job in a catering establishment) and, of course, accounting for and recording materials used. The administrative function includes the allocation of duties and, in all instances, basic work-study knowledge is needed to enable the supervisor to operate effectively. The supervisor's job may also include the writing of reports, particularly in situations where it is necessary to make comparisons and when new developments are being tried.

SOCIAL FUNCTION

The role of the supervisor is perhaps most clearly seen in staff relationships because the supervisor has to motivate the staff under his or her responsibility. 'To motivate' could be described as the initiation of movement and action; and having got the staff moving the supervisor needs to exert control. Then in order to achieve the required result the staff need to be organised.

Thus the supervisor has a threefold function regarding the handling of staff, namely: to organise, to motivate, to control; this is the essence of staff supervision.

ELEMENTS OF SUPERVISION

The accepted areas of supervision include:

- ☉ Forecasting and planning
- ☉ Organising
- ☉ Commanding
- ☉ Co-ordinating
- ☉ Controlling

Each of these will be considered within the sphere of catering.

FORECASTING

Before making plans it is necessary to look ahead, to foresee possible and probable outcomes and to allow for them. For example, the chef de partie knows that the following day is their assistant's day off, so looks ahead the plans accordingly; when the catering supervisor in the hospital and knows that there is a flu epidemic and two cooks are feeling below par he or she plans for their possible absence; if there is a spell of fine hot weather and the cook in charge of the larder foresees a continue demand for cold foods, or when and end to the hot spell is anticipated, then the plans are modified. For the supervisor forecasting is the good use of judgement acquired from previous knowledge and experience. For example, because many people are on holiday in August fewer meals will be needed in the office restaurant; no students are in residence at the college hostel, but a conference is being held and 60 meals are required. The Motor Show, bank holidays, the effects of a rail strike or a wet day, as well as less predictable situations, such as the number of customers anticipated on the opening day of a new restaurant, all need to be anticipated and planned for.

PLANNING

From the forecasting comes the planning: how many meals to prepare; how much to have in stock (should the forecast not have been completely accurate); how many staff will be needed; which staff and when. Are the staff capable of what is required of them? If not, the supervisor needs to plan some training. This, of course, is particularly important if new equipment is installed. Imagine an expensive item, such as a new type of oven, ruined on the day it is installed because the staff have not been instructed in its proper use; or, more likely, equipment lying idle because the supervisor may not like it, may consider it is sited wrongly, does not train staff to use it, or for some similar reason.

As can be seen from these examples it is necessary for forecasting to precede planning, and from planning we now move to organising.

ORGANISING

In the catering industry organisational skills are applied to food, to equipment and to staff. Organising in this context consists of ensuring that what is wanted is where it is wanted, when it is wanted, in the right amount and at the right time.

Such organisation involves the supervisor in the production of duty rotas, maybe training programmes and also cleaning schedules. Consider the supervisor's part in organising an outdoor function where a wedding reception is to be held in a church hall: 250 guests require a hot meal to be served at 2pm and in the evening a dance will be held for the guests, during which a buffet will be provided at 9pm. The supervisor would need to organise the staff to be available when required, to have their own meals and maybe to see that they have got their transport home. Calor gas stoves may be needed, and the supervisor would have to arrange for the stoves to be serviced and for the equipment used to be cleaned after the function. The food would need to be ordered so that it arrived in time to be prepared. If decorated hams were to be used on the buffet then they would need to be ordered in time so that they could be prepared, cooked and decorated over the required period of time. If the staff have never carved hams before, instruction would need to be given; this entails organising training. Needless to say, the correct quantities of food, equipment and cleaning materials would also have to be at the right place when wanted; and if all the details of the situation were not organised properly problems could occur.

COMMANDING

The supervisor has to give instructions to staff on how, what, when and where; this means that orders have to be given and a certain degree of order and discipline maintained. The successful supervisor is able to do this effectively, having made certain decisions and, usually, having established the basic priorities. Explanations of why a food is prepared in a certain manner, why this amount of time is needed to dress up food, say for a buffet, why this decision is taken and not that decision, and how these explanations and orders are given, determine the effectiveness of the supervisor.

CO-ORDINATING

Co-ordinating is the skill required to get staff to co-operate and work together. To achieve this, the supervisor has to be interested in the staff, to deal with their queries, to listen to their problems and to be helpful. Particular attention should be paid to new staff, easing them into the work situation so that they quickly become part of the team or partie. The other area of co-ordination for which the supervisor has particular responsibility is in maintaining good relations with other departments. However, the important persons to consider will always be the customers, the patients, the school children, who are to receive the service, and good service is dependent on co-operation between waiters and cooks, nurses and catering staff, stores staff, caretakers, teachers, suppliers and so on. The supervisor has a crucial role to play here.

CONTROLLING

This includes the controlling of people and products, preventing pilfering as well as improving performance; checking that staff arrive on time, do not leave before time and do not misuse time in between; checking that the product, in this case the food, is of the right standard, that is to say, the correct quantity and quality; checking to prevent waste, and also to ensure that staff operate the portion control system correctly.

This aspect of the supervisor's function involves inspecting and requires tact; controlling may include the inspecting of the swill-bin to observe the amount of waste, checking the disappearance of a quantity of food, supervising the cooking of the meat so that shrinkage is minimised and reprimanding an unpunctual member of team. The standards of any catering establishment are dependent on the supervisor doing his or her job efficiently, and standards are set and maintained by effective control, which is the function of the supervisor.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF SUPERVISOR

DELEGATION

It is recognised that delegation is the root of successful supervision; in other words, by giving a certain amount of responsibility to others the supervisor can be more effective.

The supervisor needs to be able to judge the person capable of responsibility before any delegation can take place. But then, having recognised the abilities of an employee, the supervisor who wants to develop the potential of those under his or her control must allow the person entrusted with the job to get on with it.

MOTIVATION

Since not everyone is capable of, or wants, responsibility, the supervisor still needs to motivate those who are less ambitious. Most people are prepared to work so as to improve their standard of living, but there is also another very important motivating factor: most people desire to get satisfaction from the work they do. The supervisor must be aware of why people work and how different people achieve job satisfaction and be able to act upon this knowledge. A supervisor should have been on a training course to attempt to understand what motivates people as there are a number of theories a supervisor can use to stimulate ideas.

SYMPTOMS OF POOR MOTIVATION

There are many symptoms of poor motivation, in general terms they reveal themselves as a lack of interest in getting the job done correctly and within the required time. Although they may be indicators of poor motivation, the lack of efficiency and effectiveness could also be a result of the staff overworking, personal problems, poor work design, repetitive work, lack of discipline, interpersonal conflict, lack of training, failure of the organisation to value its staff. An employee may be highly motivated but may find the work physically impossible to do.

WELFARE

People always work best in good working conditions and these include freedom from fear: fear of becoming unemployed, fear of failure at work, fear of discrimination. Job security and incentives, such as opportunities for promotion, bonuses, profit sharing and time for further study, encourage a good attitude to work; but as well as these tangible factors people need to feel wanted and to feel that what they do is important. The supervisor is in an excellent position to ensure that this happens. Personal worries affect individuals' performance and can have a very strong influence on how well or how badly they work. The physical environment will naturally cause problems if, for example, the atmosphere is humid, the working situation ill-lit, too hot or too noisy, and there is constant rush and tear, and frequent major problems to be overcome. In these circumstances staff are more liable to be quick-tempered, angry and aggressive, and the supervisor needs to consider how these factors might be dealt with.

UNDERSTANDING

The supervisor needs to try to understand both men and women (and to deal with both sexes fairly), to anticipate problems and build up a team spirit so as to overcome the problems. This entails always being fair when dealing with staff and giving them encouragement. It also means that work needs to be allocated according to each individual's ability; everyone should be kept fully occupied and the working environment must be conducive to producing their best work.

COMMUNICATION

Finally, and most important of all, the supervisor must be able to communicate effectively. To convey orders, instructions, information and manual skills requires the supervisor to possess the right attitude to those with whom he or she needs to communicate. The ability to convey orders and instructions in a manner which is acceptable to the one receiving the orders is dependent not only on the words but on the emphasis given to the words, the tone of voice, the time selected to give them and on who is present when they are given. This is a skill which supervisors need to develop. Instructions and orders can be given with authority without being authoritative.

Thus the supervisor needs technical knowledge and the ability to direct staff and to carry responsibility so as to achieve the specified targets and standards required by the organisation; this he or she is able to do by organising, co-ordinating, controlling and planning but, most of all, through effective communication.

SKILLS FOR EFFECTIVE SUPERVISION

Robert L Katz (1974) has suggested that there are three types of skills required for effective management:

- ☉ Technical
- ☉ People
- ☉ Conceptual

TECHNICAL SKILLS

These are the skills chefs, restaurant managers etc need to do. The supervisor must be skilled in the area they are supervising because they will be required in most cases to train other staff under them. Supervisors who do not have the required skills will find it hard to gain.

PEOPLE SKILLS

Supervisor are team leaders therefore they must be sensitive to the needs of others. They must be able to communicate effectively, be able to build a team to achieve the agreed goals. Listening , questioning, communicating clearly, handling conflicts and providing support and praise when praise is due.

CONCEPTUAL SKILLS

A supervisor must be able to think things through, especially when planning or analysing why things are not going as expected. A supervisor must be able to solve problems and make decisions. For supervisors, conceptual skills are necessary for reasonably short-term planning. Head chefs and hospitality managers require conceptual skills for long-term strategic planning.

Henry Mintzberg (1973) suggested that the supervisor has three broad roles:

- ☉ Inter-personal - People skills
- ☉ Informational - People & technical skills
- ☉ Decision making - Conceptual skills

INDUCTION PROGRAMMES

WHY INDUCTION?

Every establishment should have a detailed induction system. The induction process settles the new employees into their new position. It is important for the company to make a good impression as this will influence the person's attitude to the job. The new employee needs to be aware of their responsibilities. This will include not just their day to day procedures but also their role in legislation, food hygiene, health and safety.

TOPICS FOR INDUCTION

- ☉ Company procedures, policies.
- ☉ Tour of establishment and facilities.
- ☉ Fire drill procedures, health & safety procedures.
- ☉ Reporting procedures.
- ☉ Job description explained.
- ☉ Condition of employment.
- ☉ Emergency procedures.
- ☉ Where to go for advice or assistance.
- ☉ Equal opportunities.
- ☉ Accident reporting.
- ☉ Dismissal procedures.

During the first few weeks of employment the following topics need to be explained to the new employee.

- ☉ Organisational aims and objectives.
- ☉ Occupational health and safety.
- ☉ Performance appraisal.
- ☉ Job description explained.
- ☉ Grievance procedure.
- ☉ Quality standards.
- ☉ Staff development.

Where possible new employees should be issued with an employee handbook with information on the company. The supervisor should take time to explain the contents of the handbook. Staff retention is an important issue in the hospitality and catering industry. Supervisors have a key role in developing teams to achieve effective working relationship which value people. These can help to reduce turnover. Staff turnover is extremely costly and every attempt should be made to reduce unnecessary turnover.

THE COST OF STAFF TURNOVER TO AN ESTABLISHMENT

- ☉ Replacement costs - advertising, training etc.
- ☉ Overtime to existing staff.
- ☉ Extra pressure on existing staff.
- ☉ Time taken to recruit staff.
- ☉ Agency costs.
- ☉ Payroll and administration costs.
- ☉ Loss of business due to insufficient staff on duty to supply the required level of service.
- ☉ Loss of business through damage of reputation.