

The Development of a Champion Supervisor Model and Training Programme to Improve the Selection and Training of Key Staff

CP 59

Final Report

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The results and conclusions in this report are based on a series of experiments, surveys and assessments conducted over a one-year period. The conditions under which the experiments were carried out and the results have been reported in detail and with accuracy. However, because of the biological nature of the work it must be borne in mind that different circumstances and conditions could produce different results. Therefore, care must be taken with interpretation of the results, especially if they are used as the basis for commercial product recommendations.

AUTHENTICATION

I declare that this work was done under my supervision according to the procedures described herein and that the report represents a true and accurate record of the results obtained.

Chris Rose
Chris Rose Associates

Signature Date

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Grower Summary

Headlines

- The very best (champion) supervisors share specific hallmark qualities
- These behaviours, skills, attitudes and values can be learned
- Best results are achieved when management create a really positive working environment and culture

Background and expected deliverables

Previous projects (SF 71 Reducing strawberry labour costs by increasing picking speeds and improving harvest efficiency. TF 171 Improving Harvest Productivity in Top Fruit. 2006-7.

FV 298 The Production of Increased Labour Efficiency Models in Horticulture (Field Vegetables), focussed on improving the productivity of workers through modelling the best performers. It was noted that in most cases, individual performance was significantly affected by the quality of the supervision.

It was also noted that supervisors were often chosen solely because they had been a fast picker. In many cases the only training was a day or two alongside a more experienced supervisor. As a result, the standard of supervision varies widely within businesses and even more markedly across businesses.

Growers may grow their crops to a similar standard and employ labour from the same sources, yet the harvesting operations often vary enormously in cost and effectiveness, due in large part to supervision.

The aim of this project is:

To enable levy paying businesses to reduce labour costs through better selection and training of supervisors.

Summary of the project and main conclusions

A number of the best supervisors from top performing businesses across different sectors (soft fruit, top fruit, field vegetables, mushrooms) were selected along with some less effective supervisors, totalling 20 individuals. Through observation and interview a number of common hallmark qualities were identified that were present or largely present in the best supervisors, missing or partly missing in the average and almost totally missing from the least effective supervisors. This resulted in the champion supervisor model.

The champion supervisor model

Overview

The model comprises a set of hallmark traits, some of which may be inherent and some acquired, specifically; skills, knowledge and attitudes as well as intrinsic values, beliefs and behaviours unique to excellent supervisors. Whilst all of these can be taught, values (which are not easily changed), self-confidence and the ability to make the job their own should generally be present at the selection stage. Attitudes can be changed if the person is willing to learn the requisite skills in this model and new, more supportive beliefs can replace old limited ones with coaching,

External factors

Whilst champions make the most of any situation, environment has an enormous effect on the level to which they can aspire. They cannot flourish in the absence of good management. Supervisors want to be involved, or at the very least kept informed, about requirements and changes. Management and supervisors need to agree targets and expectations ahead of time and good managers will publicly support decisions taken by supervisors.

Even brilliant staff can become mediocre when badly managed. Employing the best is not enough; to realise the full potential of any individual requires excellent management and a supportive environment within which to work

Hallmark behaviours

Self-starter

Champion supervisors are self starters who work on their own initiative and do not need much direction. They don't need management to check on procedures because they keep in mind targets to be achieved and quality standards to be met.

People-oriented

They are people oriented with an appreciation for process and procedure. They want their people to do well and they care for and about their people.

Own the job

They stand out from the rest and make the job their own. They have a certain 'presence' which is hard to miss. Although they appreciate the rules, they do not blindly follow them and will take appropriate and responsible action if required to do so. In order to maximise the potential of this type of individual, they require freedom to act in urgent situations where a decision can affect either the safety or well-being of one of their staff or the reputation, productivity and profitability of their employing company.

Hallmark values

Trustworthy

Employers can have total trust in champion supervisors. They are honest, reliable and keep their manager informed.

Loyalty

Champion supervisors understand that they are working for the business. Although they support their people and will at times speak up for them to management, ultimately their loyalty is to management. For them, loyalty works both ways and they will give loyalty while expecting to receive loyalty from their staff.

Pride in work

Champions work to their own high standards, regardless of whether others see or appreciate it. They are proactive and motivated from within and are only satisfied when they meet their own high expectations.

Hallmark knowledge

Of how to do the job (previous experience)

Champion supervisors know from 1st hand experience how to do the job to champion level. If they were not at champion level themselves, they have a full understanding of what knowledge, skills and attitudes are required to achieve champion level. In particular they recognise and teach to new people the natural rhythm that good workers have when they are doing any repetitive job.

Of the standards

Champion supervisors make it their business to have a thorough knowledge and understanding of the required standards – both written and / or any variations demanded or expected by management. They are able to react immediately to any changes in requirements.

Hallmark skills

Communication

Champion supervisors are excellent communicators. The ability to communicate in the languages of the people they supervise is a great advantage, though not essential; typically they will learn some key words of languages they are not fluent in. Translators are used as a last resort as this breaks the connection they want with the individual.

The champion supervisor will do whatever it takes to understand and be understood. They achieve this through their speaking, listening and observational skills combined with effective techniques for overcoming communication barriers (e.g. Use of demonstrations, sign language, pictures).

Observational skills

They use this skill with the intention of helping people to improve rather than to catch them doing something wrong. They are able to distinguish between unintentional mistakes and deliberate wrongdoing and decide which is the most appropriate and effective response: teaching, coaching or disciplining.

Orientation

From the outset champion supervisors are friendly, welcoming and informative. They establish a positive relationship and engender trust in new workers first and then they address employee responsibilities. They establish the requirement to fully and consistently comply with rules including the need to do every job correctly, to the best of their ability.

Teaching ability

They are natural teachers and are effective through having the knowledge, the communication skills and a real desire to pass on all relevant knowledge. They are aware of different learning styles and speeds and adjust their approach accordingly. They are highly intuitive and instinctively know (despite language challenges) when one of their people is in trouble and needs help.

They take corrective action early before poor habits can be formed or small issues become significant problems.

Coaching

Champion supervisors make every effort to connect with each and every person under their control. They achieve connection through intention; i.e. the supervisor genuinely wants to help the individual meet his or her needs as well as meeting the requirements of the job.

They naturally want to coach their people to achieve great results and so use a nurturing, supporting and caring approach. Through teaching and coaching they successfully instil a strong work ethic and standards into their people.

Constructive correction

Once workers are competent, champion supervisors use a firm (not aggressive) approach to correcting errors until each person becomes sufficiently self-disciplined (self-correcting). For those that do not readily achieve self-discipline, they use constructive correction; i.e. they use the minimum level of sanctions to achieve the required result, only when other approaches have failed and only to those who need it. In addition the correction is transitional; i.e. the aim of any sanction or disciplinary action is to teach the individual the requirement to consistently do the job correctly (self-discipline). Once this is achieved they continue to discretely monitor returning to coaching in preference and use selective disciplining only if necessary.

Champion supervisors take a very dim view of cheating and if constructive correction action fails to achieve the desired result will use the more serious sanction of stopping persistent offenders from working. They understand the difference between over disciplining and constructive correction i.e. Over disciplining is akin to 'policing' and rarely if ever achieves very much except workers who do not work when the 'policeman' is not present and a culture of fear along with low morale. Supervisors who make this mistake tend to shout frequently at their workers. When constructive correction is used, the intention is to help and guide the individual as opposed to belittle and punish.

Firmness

Champion supervisors understand the difference between assertiveness (getting required results whilst respecting the other) and aggressiveness. When they need to be firm they do so without shouting or rudeness. They focus on what was done wrong rather than the character of the person. They act quickly when a problem arises before it can escalate.

Fair

All good supervisors go to great lengths to ensure that they act fairly and are seen to be and known to be fair. Champions will take the time to explain to and reassure anyone who believes they have been unfairly treated.

Morale raisers

They are sensitive to individual and collective moods and know that productivity is higher and problems fewer when the workforce is happy. They keep their own morale high and are particularly enthusiastic and energetic when they sense morale is falling. They seek to understand any problems and help where they can, involving others such as HR or management when appropriate.

Hallmark attitudes

Willingness to learn

Champion supervisors are constantly looking to improve. Whilst confident of their abilities, they are always seeking better ideas, methods and techniques.

Belief in the potential of all

Although they know that some may not become competent and quick, champion supervisors know that, barring an irreversible impediment, everyone has the potential to. Acting from that belief, they give equal effort and attention to everyone initially and in time give extra focus to those who need it most.

Respect

Initially they respect each and every individual for who they are and what they have the potential to achieve. This approach generally engenders respect in return. They see respect as a 2-way process and may lose respect for those that have no respect for them. They maintain respect for anyone who is really trying their best, regardless of level of achievement or speed of improvement.

Level of empathy

Champion supervisors understand the physical and mental challenges their people are facing and connect empathically. They make an effort to learn names and get to know each person. They do this because they are naturally compassionate; they like people and want to help them succeed.

Flexibility

Champion supervisors thrive on the dynamics of managing people, product and logistics in a pressured environment. They are willing and able to respond immediately to changing instructions, circumstances, conditions or emotions. They achieve this by having a strong grip on reality, a positive outlook and through being action oriented. When one approach to a problem fails to get desired results, they are quick to try different methods. Through making many quick small decisions they frequently avert the need for major changes.

Self-confidence, self-belief and self-esteem

Champion supervisors have a deeply held belief in their abilities and a confidence that they can tackle fresh challenges. This manifests itself as a presence rather than as arrogance, supportive and encouraging rather than brash and domineering. A champion supervisor acts effectively without needing to show that they have authority. They look after themselves and their possessions. They realise that they need to lead by example and that it is not what they say, rather who they are and what they do, that defines them to others. Though experience will enhance these qualities, they need to be present at the start for them to take on the role.

Application

The true hallmark of a champion supervisor is the consistent application of all of the above qualities. The measure of a champion is how effective they are on their worst days. Champion supervisors work hard to minimise the effect of any problems outside of their work. They know that their emotional state will always be, to some extent, mirrored in their people and so they keep their levels of energy and enthusiasm high. Champion Supervisors are an extremely valuable asset and efforts should be made to make them feel valued and part of the greater whole. In return they will do whatever it takes to keep things running efficiently and profitably.

Transferring the model

Two different processes at two businesses were chosen to test the model. These were mushroom harvesting and packing of soft fruit.

Mushroom harvesting

This business has two very experienced supervisors, a male one, M, and a female, F. After observing them in action and we invited them to score themselves using the Champion Supervisor Scorecard (see appendix 1). We also asked two of their managers to score them. There was a generally very good correlation between the sets of scores. This indicated that the supervisors were aware of their strengths and weaknesses. We identified that M had some specific issues. He admitted that his style had led to tears on occasions.

The next step involved focussing on the traits with the lowest scores. We transferred the skills they were missing through a combination of asking them what they would need to do to raise their score in this area, and showing how they could change their actions and behaviours to get better results. This process took about 45 minutes. We also left them with bullet point key cards of the model (Appendix 2).

“Following the visits we had from yourselves regards the supervisor/team leader project, I am confident to say that it has had a positive effect.

I interviewed a few of the harvesting team and there is a noticeable change especially from M. The main area of improvement is people skills. In the past M found it difficult to communicate in a positive way to team members.

I had a discussion with M regarding the programme and he had a positive attitude towards the programme. What was encouraging was that he had his key ring with the cards on in his pocket which he said he used for a reminder.”

Harvesting Manager

Soft fruit packhouse

This was a busy operation with 6 lines and 70 staff. Senior management were keen for us to come in, though they pointed out that management in the packhouse would be less enthusiastic. Senior management had little day to day involvement in the organising and running of the facility due to other time pressures and an attitude of “If it’s not broke, don’t try to fix it”.

Initially we spent a day observing. We found that the floor manager and all supervisors appeared to be continually very busy and yet never had any time to engage with the packing staff, who appeared de-motivated. It became apparent that the supervisors were 'busy being busy' rather than being effective. When we spoke with the packhouse managers about this, they were defensive and said that everyone was too busy ensuring orders were met to look at how they could improve efficiency. They were working 12 hour shifts and longer.

We were finally able to spend an hour with the floor manager who filled in the scorecard. We were able to get scorecards filled in by the other supervisors; however we were not able to spend any time with them. The floor manager instead suggested that she would transfer the model to them. To date this has not happened. All the self-scores were very high, which suggests they don't see the problems.

The real result, to date, of the involvement with this business is that senior management have realised that 'it is broke and needs fixing'. They are now instigating a major reform of the whole operation.

Financial Benefits

It has not been possible within the timescale of this project to quantify financial benefits. Whilst most would agree that better supervision will lead to better results, there are too many variables involved in the harvesting and packing of perishable products using seasonal labour to derive incontrovertible results.

One champion supervisor whom we studied increased productivity in lettuce harvesting from typically 30 pallets per day to 45 pallets per day over a 2 year period, through better techniques, induction, teaching and coaching. He introduced a different method of bagging and sealing the lettuces and taught workers how to work more effectively as a team. It is possible that this gain may have been partly due to growing better crops, however other good growers were not achieving these levels.

Champion supervisors save businesses money through:

- Superior organisation
- Increasing productivity
- Reducing crop losses through getting more picked
- Producing better pickers / cutters / packers etc.
- Improving quality
- Reducing slippage
- Reducing overtime
- Improving timeliness of operations
- Improving morale
- Reducing staff turnover
- Improving recruitment levels
- Freeing management time

The difficulty in measuring the gains may stop growers from making sufficient efforts to select and train supervisors. The factors in the above list interact and overlap to produce a massive effect that can mean the difference between business growth and business failure.

“Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted”

Albert Einstein

Action points for growers

- Look for the key hallmark qualities when recruiting supervisors. These are self confidence, self motivation, trustworthiness, loyalty, good observation, effective communication, empathy, assertiveness, flexibility and willingness to learn and adapt.
- Ensure your management embodies the key hallmark qualities; lead by example.
- Provide the training and support to enable supervisors to develop their skills including teaching and coaching other employees.
- Liaise closely with supervisors so that the entire management team has bought into procedures, targets, expectations and is fully aware of any developing situations.
- Give supervisors authority to take action and back them up so that the management team is seen to be united and working together.

Science Section

Introduction

The rationale for undertaking this project was:

- Horticulture is labour intensive and relies on large numbers of untrained seasonal workers
- Most gang work (harvesting, planting, training and many other husbandry jobs) depends upon supervisors (team leaders, gangers etc) to organize the work and ensure quality standards and production targets are achieved
- Well publicised activities of the GLA (Gangmasters Licensing Authority) and pressure from customers are forcing businesses to comply with employment legislation
- Businesses rely heavily on supervisors and yet:
 - Supervisors are very frequently chosen without defined selection procedures
 - They are very often seasonal and / or untrained
- The industry has the opportunity to select supervisors from the very best of the many thousands of seasonal harvest workers who work in the industry
- The industry is facing serious labour shortages now and for the foreseeable future
- There is an urgent need to maximise the effectiveness of the labour available
- A good supervisor can save a business hundreds and sometimes thousands of pounds a week
- Significant productivity gains can be made through better selection, training and managing of supervisors
- Businesses using gangmasters can benefit through working with their labour suppliers

Materials and Methods

The project involved modelling supervisors from HDC member businesses using Advanced Behavioural Modelling techniques including NLP to create what was termed the 'Champion Supervisor Model'

The overall aim of the project was to enable HDC levy paying businesses in all sectors to reduce labour costs through better selection and training of supervisors

i) Specific objectives

- To assess the differences between effective and ineffective supervisors
- To develop a model (*the champion supervisor model*) comprising the traits and behaviours of the very best supervisors that can be transferred to less effective supervisors
- To meet the differing requirements of individual businesses across all sectors within one model
- To develop procedures (e.g. questionnaires, psychometric tests, interviews) that growers can use to improve the selection of supervisors
- To provide guidance on effective management of supervisors including a self-score questionnaire for growers / managers
- To develop and make available a training course that businesses can use to provide in-house training

ii) Methods

The work was conducted by Chris Rose (horticultural labour performance specialist) and Kathy Strong (an NLP expert and experienced applied psychologist). They used the same proven NLP methodology as used successfully in earlier projects (SF 71, TF 171, and FV 298). The key attributes, skills and strategies that differentiate the best supervisors from the rest were captured through a combination of observation and interviews.

A list of key qualities was developed from careful study of observation notes and interviews. Each quality was given a weighting (green highlight) to give an overall score on a skills matrix. These scores were compared with the performance of the supervisors.

Champion Supervisor Project: Skills Matrix

HDC Champion Supervisor Project - Traits Chart
Scores 0 = not present, 1 = low level, 2 = reasonable level, 3 = optimal level

Supervisor	10 Coaching	3 Previous picking experience	2 English Basic / Fluent	10 Communication	5 Job Knowledge	7 Assertive	10 Fair	2 Morale Raiser	10 Respect Given	Respect Received	7 Level of Empathy	3 Belief in potential of all	3 Self-confidence	3 Self-esteem	3 Flexibility	Total Score
A	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	234
B	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	232
C	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	231
D	3	1	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	228
E	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	2	3	3	222
F	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	222
G	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	1	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	221
H	3	0	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	3	213
I	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	0	3	3	1	3	3	3	3	207
J	2	3	3	3	3	3	3	0	2	3	2	3	3	3	3	201
K	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	0	2	2	3	3	3	3	3	201
L	3	3	3	2	3	1	3	0	2	2	3	2	3	3	2	188
M	2.5	1	3	2	3	3	3	0	3	3	1	1	3	3	3	187
N	2	3	3	3	3	2	3	0	2	1	1	3	3	2	2	181
O	1	3	3	2	3	3	3	0	1	1	2	2	3	2	3	165
P	0		3	2	3	2	3	0	3	3	2	3	3	3	2	162
Q	1	3	2	3	2	3	3	0	1	1	1	1	1	2	3	152
R	0	3	3	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	0	2	2	2	109
S	0	3	3	1	2	1	3	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	2	103
T	0	0	3	1	3	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	54
U	0	3	1	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	48

Figure 1. Skills matrix

The weighting applied in the table above involves a degree of subjectivity. The process of refining the model involves removing traits that, whilst they may be present and even desirable, are not essential for top performance. Traits and external factors that we excluded include: nationality, sex, upbringing and family environment, whether trained or self-taught, farm culture, education, and the need to be popular.

Objectivity

The modelling process requires a high level of objectivity. Empirical measurements are used where possible. When scoring behavioural and personality traits there is inevitably an element of subjectivity.

The subjective element is minimised by the involvement of two trained NLP modellers.

Validating the Model

The final step in refining the model was to check it with the best of the supervisors that we had previously studied and with several managers. The feedback was extremely positive and in the absence of suggestions of anything missed out, the model was deemed complete.

Results and Discussion

The Champion Supervisor Model

Overview

The model comprises a set of hallmark traits, some of which may be inherent and some acquired, specifically; skills, knowledge and attitudes as well as intrinsic values, beliefs and behaviours unique to excellent supervisors. Whilst all of these can be taught, values (which are not easily changed), self-confidence and the ability to make the job their own should generally be present at the selection stage. Attitudes can be changed if the person is willing to learn the requisite skills in this model and new, more supportive beliefs can replace old limited ones with coaching,

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The Model

Behaviours

Self-Starter

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People-oriented

They are people oriented with an appreciation for process and procedure. They want their people to do well and they care for and about their people.

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Employers can have total trust in champion supervisors. They are honest, reliable and keep their manager informed.

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Pride in work

Champions work to their own high standards, regardless of whether others see or appreciate it. They are proactive and motivated from within and are only satisfied when they meet their own high expectations.

Knowledge

Of how to do the job (previous experience)

Champion supervisors know from 1st hand experience how to do the job to champion level. If they were not at champion level themselves, they have a full understanding of what knowledge, skills and attitudes are required to achieve champion level. In particular they recognise and teach to new people the natural rhythm that good workers have when they are doing any repetitive job.

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through being action oriented. When one approach to a problem fails to get desired results, they are quick to try different methods. Through making many quick small decisions they frequently avert the need for major changes.

Self-confidence, self-belief and self-esteem

Champion supervisors have a deeply held belief in their abilities and a confidence that they can tackle fresh challenges. This manifests itself as a presence rather than as arrogance, supportive and encouraging rather than brash and domineering. A champion supervisor acts effectively without needing to show that they have authority. They look after themselves and their possessions. They realise that they need to lead by example and that it is not what they say, rather who they are and what they do, that defines them to others. Though experience will enhance these qualities, they need to be present at the start for them to take on the role.

Application

The true hallmark of a champion supervisor is the consistent application of all of the above qualities. The measure of a champion is how effective they are on their worst days. Champion supervisors work hard to minimise the effect of any problems outside of their work. They know that their emotional state will always be, to some extent, mirrored in their people and so they keep their levels of energy and enthusiasm high. Champion Supervisors are an extremely valuable asset and efforts should be made to make them feel valued and part of the greater whole. In return they will do whatever it takes to keep things running efficiently and profitably.

Transferring the Model

Two different processes at two businesses were chosen to test the model. These were mushroom harvesting and packing of soft fruit.

Mushroom harvesting

This business has two very experienced supervisors, a male one, M, and a female, F. After observing them in action and we invited them to score themselves using the Champion Supervisor Scorecard (see appendix 1). We also asked two of their managers to score them. There was a generally very good correlation between the sets of scores. This indicated that the supervisors were aware of their strengths and weaknesses. We identified that M had some specific issues. He admitted that his style had led to tears on occasions.

The next step involved focussing on the traits with the lowest scores. We transferred the skills they were missing through a combination of asking them what they would need to do to raise their score in this area, and showing how they could change their actions and behaviours to get better results. This process took @ 45 minutes. We also left them with bullet point key cards of the model (Appendix 2).

"Following the visits we had from yourselves regards the supervisor/team leader project, I am confident to say that it has had a positive effect.

I interviewed a few of the harvesting team and there is a noticeable change especially from M. The main area of improvement is people skills. In the past M found it difficult to communicate in a positive way to team members.

I had a discussion with M regarding the programme and he had a positive attitude towards the programme. What was encouraging was that he had his key ring with the cards on in his pocket which he said he used for reminder.

Harvesting Manager

Soft fruit packhouse

This was a busy operation with 6 lines and 70 staff. Senior management were keen for us to come in, though they pointed out that management in the packhouse would be less enthusiastic. Senior management had little day to day involvement in the organising and running of the facility due to other time pressures and an attitude of "If it's not broke, don't try to fix it".

Initially we spent a day observing. We found that the floor manager and all supervisors appeared to be continually very busy and yet never had any time to engage with the packing staff, who appeared de-motivated. It became apparent that the supervisors were 'busy being busy' rather than being effective. When we spoke with the packhouse managers about this, they were defensive and said that everyone was too busy ensuring orders were met to look at how they could improve efficiency. They were working 12 hour shifts and longer.

We were finally able to spend an hour with the floor manager who filled in the scorecard. We were able to get scorecards filled in by the other supervisors; however we were not able to spend any time with them. The floor manager instead suggested that she would transfer the model to them. To date this has not happened. All the self-scores were very high, which suggests they don't see the problems.

The real result, to date, of the involvement with this business is that senior management have realised that 'it is broke and needs fixing'. They are now instigating a major reform of the whole operation.

Further work

We propose to follow up the findings to date in both businesses in 3-6 months time as results from change of this nature are not instant.

Financial Benefits

It has not been possible within the timescale of this project to quantify financial benefits. Whilst most would agree that better supervision will lead to better results, there are too many variables involved in the harvesting and packing of perishable products using seasonal labour to derive incontrovertible results.

One champion supervisor whom we studied increased productivity in lettuce harvesting from typically 30 pallets per day to 45 pallets per day over a 2 year period, through better techniques, induction, teaching and coaching. He introduced a different method of bagging and sealing the lettuces and taught workers how to work more effectively as a team. It is possible that this gain may have been partly due to growing better crops, however other good growers were not achieving these levels.

Champion supervisors save businesses money through:

- Superior organisation
- Increasing productivity
- Reducing crop losses through getting more picked
- Producing better pickers / cutters / packers etc.
- Improving quality
- Reducing slippage
- Reducing overtime
- Improving timeliness of operations
- Improving morale
- Reducing staff turnover
- Improving recruitment levels
- Freeing management time

The difficulty in measuring the gains may stop growers from making sufficient efforts to select and train supervisors. The factors in the above list interact and overlap to produce a massive effect that can mean the difference between business growth and business failure.

“Everything that can be counted does not necessarily count; everything that counts cannot necessarily be counted”

Albert Einstein

Champion Level Performance

On studying the traits in the model some are in awe of just how good a person would have to be to attain champion level in every trait. The model is aspirational - we have not met any one individual at such a level that they could not improve. It sets a standard to aim for and raises the performance bar.

Supervisor Selection

Whilst labour pre-selection is the subject of a concurrent HDC project, the Champion Supervisor Model is an excellent tool for the selection of new supervisors. It is particularly useful when supervisors are to be selected from a pool of current labour (e.g. pickers, packers etc).

Many businesses currently select supervisors in a variety of subjective ways. Often the selection is made on the advice of existing supervisors, who then train them. This tends to guarantee any weaknesses are passed on and become endemic within the business.

HDC Champion Supervisor Project - Traits Chart
Scores 0 = not present, 1-2 = low level, 3-4 = reasonable level, 5-6 = optimal level

Candidate	5 Self-starter	8 People oriented	4 Own the job	8 Trustworthy	5 Loyalty	7 Pride in Work	4 Knowledge of the Job	5 Knowledge of Standards	10 Communication	8 Observation Skills	5 Suitability for Inductions	10 Teaching Ability	8 Coaching	8 Constructive Correction	4 Firmness	10 Fairness	3 Morale raiser	8 Willingness to Learn	2 Belief in Potential of all	7 Respect Given	5 Level of Empathy	8 Flexibility
A	4	6	3	5	5	3	4	5	6	5	3	5	2	6	5	3	2	4	2	3	2	5
B	3	2	4	2	3	3	3	5	2	2	1	3	4	1	5	2	3	4	3	5	2	1
C	3	4	3	3	2	6	4	4	3	4	6	5	6	2	2	5	6	4	6	6	6	4
D	2	1	2	2	3	5	6	6	4	4	0	3	1	5	6	2	0	2	1	2	0	4
	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6	6

Figure 2. Skills matrix

The skills matrix shown in figures 1 and 2 enables employers to decide which skills, behaviours, values and attitudes are most important to them. Each one can be given a weighting (green row) which can be altered depending on what traits are most important to the business. E.g. In the example above in figure 2, knowledge of the job and standards are not given a particularly heavy weighting as they can be taught. The last row shows the notional maximum that could be scored.

It may be felt that there are too many criteria, in which case they could be reduced; this should be done with caution and consideration given to why a given trait is not deemed important.

Other criteria could be added, such as level of English spoken and understood or ability to use a computer. Essential criteria should not be included; if they are missing the candidate should not make the shortlist.

A more likely scenario is that not enough is known about the candidates to give a meaningful score. This will allow focus to be given on what knowledge is missing about each of them. They could do a self-assessment (Scorecard - Appendix 1). It may be possible to observe them in some role with responsibility. Interview questions can be devised to draw out how they might react in different challenging situations.

Too little consideration is given to the selection of supervisors. It is less important exactly how this model is used, more that it is used and the increased focus will yield better results.

Discussion on External Factors

Not many companies consider that they are sitting on a goldmine but given the climate we are operating in today, human capital can be the difference that makes a difference. Years ago, there was resistance when anyone mentioned the possibility that 'soft' skills could possibly have any impact on the bottom line. Increasingly businesses are discovering that not only does it have an impact, it is dictating the way we work and interact with others.

"Workforce capability is a competitive issue and a source of strategic advantage."

Curtis, B., Hefley, W.E., and Miller, S. (2002).

Experiences gained in the course of researching and testing during this project, combined with other HDC project work and commercial work show a clear need for improved working environments and cultures. This can be summed up with the equation: Performance = Potential - Interference

For pickers to reach their potential requires great supervision and freedom from interference (e.g. poor organisation, poor accommodation, poor crops etc).

For supervisors to reach their potential requires excellent management. This can be best demonstrated through a model of behaviour known as "The People Capability Maturity Model" (Curtis, B., Hefley, W.E., and Miller, S. (2002). Carnegie Mellon SEI). This consists of five maturity levels that establish successive foundations for continuously improving individual competencies, developing effective teams, motivating improved performance, and shaping the workforce the organization needs to accomplish its future business plans.

Effective performance is closely linked to the way an individual perceives the role and the type of work strategies which are adopted. Many businesses that started as 'small family businesses' now employ hundreds of people, many seasonally, and lack systems and accountability. They are at level 1 or 2.

The five levels of maturity in the People Capability Maturity Model are:

1. Initial Level - Typical characteristics: Inconsistency in performing practices,
Displacement of responsibility
Ritualised work practices
Emotionally detached workforce

2. Managed Level - Typical characteristics: Work overload
Environmental distractions,
Unclear performance objectives or feedback
Lack of relevant knowledge, or skill
Poor communication
Low morale

3. Defined Level - Although they are performing basic workforce management practices, there is inconsistency in how these practices are performed across units and little synergy across the organization. The organization misses opportunities to standardize workforce practices because the common knowledge and skills needed for conducting its business activities have not been identified.
4. Predictable Level - The organization manages and exploits the capability created by its framework of workforce competencies. The organization is now able to manage its capability and performance qualitatively and quantitatively. The organization is able to predict its capability for performing work because it can quantify the capability of its workforce and of the competency-based processes they use in performing their assignments.
5. Optimizing Level - The entire organization is focused on continual improvement.

So why is this information of importance to growers? In building a model of excellent supervision, we discovered on testing that we were up against these very factors and it is likely that growers might similarly find that unless an organisation has reached level 4 at least, implementing the supervisor model will be fraught with problems and excuses for poor performance such as 'too busy' to try model, 'we are OK as we are' to hide fear of trying anything new and so on. In fairness, one of our test sites was at level five and implementing the model and testing it was a dream and a credit to the grower company's philosophy and attitude so we know what can happen when conditions are right and workers are receptive to new ideas.

Although grower attitudes and practices are beyond the remit of this project, we feel nonetheless that it is critically important that growers should be aware of the role they play in contributing to excellent performance. The People Capability Maturity Model (PCMM) should provide a timely warning of potential problems and the need to move the organization to level 5.

Policing

A key area that was highlighted in this study is the need to understand the reason for less effective work patterns (dysfunctional) behaviour. In supervision particularly, there appears to be a general pattern of what we call 'policing' and a lack of trust. Some supervisors use aggression (e.g. shouting, threats) to maintain discipline and although culturally, there is an acceptance of such behaviour in some circles, the overall effect is to provide a climate of fear which is not in our opinion, conducive to excellent performance. True champions ignore 'bullying' supervisors and just get on with what they are excellent at, but in the real world, as much as we would like to have a field full of champions, it is probably not going to happen.

"The goal of abusive people, at work or at home, is to gain or maintain power over others and/or to mask their own incompetence" (Heuerman, 2001)

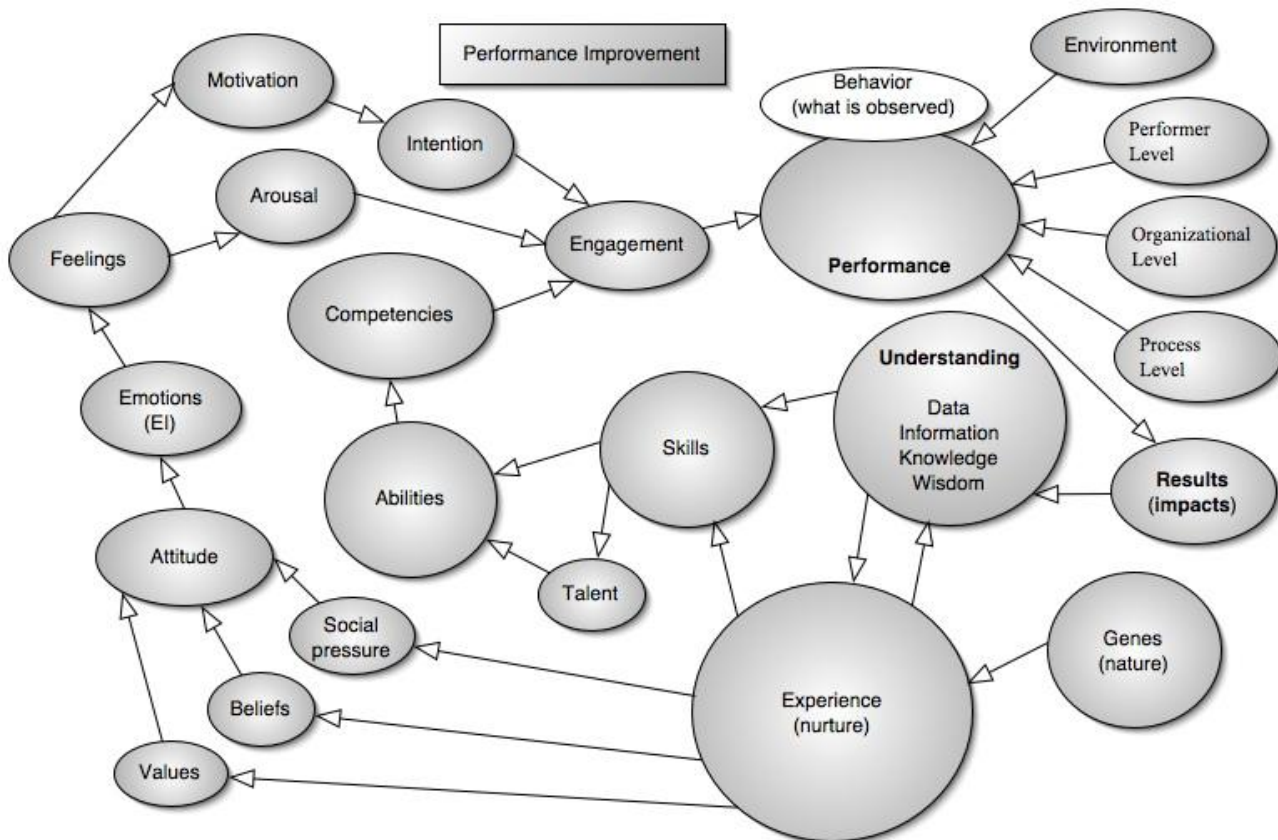
The alternative, employed by better supervisors, is a coaching approach wherein the supervisor helps facilitate improvements in workers and any problems and all successes are owned by the worker.

Along with policing or bullying, workers often attempt to disguise the motives for their behaviour possibly believing that nobody would listen anyway and sometimes even they are unaware of their motives. The policing attitude often comes from a culture of fear – driven from the top down – and is therefore modelled from those higher up the chain who believe that people cannot be trusted and need to be kept in their place. In very busy environments, which seem endemic to the horticultural industry, those in charge do not have time to attend to the potential minefield that stems from people problems. We believe this area to be important in terms of productivity and supervisors would do well to be aware that the people they supervise could be struggling with unmet needs, role and/or job confusion, anxiety/fear due to supervisor's leadership style or simply be homesick and disorientated.

A very important finding emerging from research studies (e.g. McClelland & Watson, 1973, Winter & Carlson, 1988), is that people may often be unaware of the motives that underlie dysfunctional aspects of their behaviour. In the context of work performance this may mean that problem behaviours, or less effective work patterns, reflect needs that are being poorly channelled or expressed. In order to identify the source of the problem there is likely to be benefit in reviewing both role demands and the person's underlying personal objectives or motives. (David Sharpley MSc., AFBPsS, CPsychol)

In previous HDC projects, we highlighted the value in making workers feel involved and part of something important and this ties in with the natural need for people to belong to something greater than themselves (Abraham Maslow - A Theory of Human Motivation 1943). Basic needs must be met before people will even begin to aspire to greatness. The need for achievement and for recognition, for example, are often ignored in the belief that workers have a straightforward job to do and will not be interested in either of these needs, yet we have observed the difference to productivity when simple competitive games are introduced or when a supervisor remembers to say 'please' 'thank you' and 'well done'.

The following diagram (source unknown) gives a visual image of the dynamics surrounding performance.



Behavioural Patterns

When creating champion models what we are doing is looking for consistent patterns that turn up in the champions we are observing and in so doing we also understand how these patterns come about. In order to extrapolate the 'difference that makes a difference', we observe both excellent performers and those who are not as effective and who might be struggling.

“A pattern shows relations among groups of information so that there is both a consistency and completeness of relations. This creates its own context, which serves as an *archetype*-- foundational structures of thought that surface over and over again through human history and across cultures so that both repeatability and predictability are implied”.

“Patterns become knowledge when a person is able to realize and understand the patterns and their implications, that is, they become more self-contextualizing”

Davenport T, Prusak L (1998) *Working Knowledge*. Harvard Business School Press: Boston, MA.

What was not as obvious in the beginning of these studies was that the patterns we were observing had their roots in environmental conditions that could either adversely affect our subjects or contribute to the nature of their champion performance (true champions appear to be oblivious to the influence of their environment). The old saying ‘you are your own worst enemy’ was never truer and we have witnessed the devastating consequences of poor management and the truly enlightening results of great management.

Conclusions

In conclusion, we are convinced that the champion supervisor model will revolutionise the way in which workers are managed if and when the environment within which the supervision occurs is supportive of and encourages the use of the model i.e. the business aspires to be a model of excellent management, committed to continuous improvement.

The best performing supervisors worked in an environment that allowed them to flourish or at least didn't prevent it. Before the champion supervisor model can be successfully applied, business managers need to examine how they are managing key staff. Champion supervisors need champion managers.

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Davenport T, Prusak L (1998) Working Knowledge. Harvard Business School Press: Boston, MA.

Appendix 1: Champion Supervisor / Team Leader Scorecard

Name :

The aim of this scorecard is to understand what you see as your strengths and weaknesses. It will help enormously with the training and support that will be provided before and during this season. Read each description and decide how fully this describes you and how you work. Be honest with yourself, and it is perfectly acceptable to give yourself a high score in areas that you think you are good. (You have all been selected for your proven strengths so we expect to see some high scores **J**). Your answers will not be shared amongst team leaders or be made public in any way.

Guidelines for scoring: 10 = Absolutely Brilliant, 9 = Outstanding, 8 = Excellent, 7 = Very Good
6 = Good, 5 = Average, 4 = Poor, 3 = Very Poor, 2 = Awful, 1 = Useless

Give one score for each trait, so that the column on the right has one score per box.

Trait	Description	(1-10)
A. Behaviours		
Self-starter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Use your own initiative. <input type="checkbox"/> Direct your work yourself. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep your targets in mind. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep quality standards in mind. 	
People-oriented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Think - people first: Then - do what has to be done. <input type="checkbox"/> Understand success for them is success for you. <input type="checkbox"/> Believe your people matter. 	
Own the Job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Aim to have a presence rather than a loud voice. <input type="checkbox"/> Know the rules you have to keep. <input type="checkbox"/> Only bend rules when in the company's interest. <input type="checkbox"/> Make the right decision for each circumstance. 	
B. Values		
Trustworthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Earn the trust of your boss. <input type="checkbox"/> Act from knowledge that honesty always pays. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure you can always be relied upon. <input type="checkbox"/> Keep your boss informed to their satisfaction. 	
Loyalty	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Work for the good of the business. <input type="checkbox"/> Support your people in a way that supports the business. <input type="checkbox"/> Ultimately loyal to management. <input type="checkbox"/> When loyalty is given, expect to receive it 	
Pride in Work	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Keep your standards very high, even when nobody sees. <input type="checkbox"/> Do whatever it takes to reach <u>your</u> standards. 	
Knowledge of the Job	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure you know how to do each job. <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure you know the champion level of each job. <input type="checkbox"/> Understand the skills & attitudes of champions. 	

Trait	Description	(1-10)
Knowledge of the Standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Know & understand all standards – Both written & any variations. Ø React quickly to change of specification. Ø Communicate any change promptly. 	
<u>C. Skills</u>		
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Learn key words of each language. Ø Make a connection with each person. Ø Use translators as last resort. Ø Work hard to understand and be understood. Ø Use demonstrations, sign language. 	
Great Observation Skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Look – See – Act (Praise / Help / Correct). Ø Catch them doing something right. Ø Help prevent mistakes through teaching. Ø Correct wrong-doing in a firm and positive way. 	
Induction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Be friendly, welcoming and informative. Ø Gain respect and trust first. Ø Then deal with rules and responsibilities. 	
Teaching Ability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Cultivate a desire to teach. Ø Find each person's learning style. Ø Be aware who needs help. Ø Take corrective action early. 	
Coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Make a connection with each person. Ø Know their goals, wants and needs. Ø Help them achieve success. Ø Nurture them so that their confidence grows. Ø Ensure standards of work are maintained. 	
Constructive Correction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Correct errors firmly once they really know the job. Ø Use minimum disciplinary measures that will get results. Ø If repeated, take stronger action. Remain calm and polite. Ø Aim is for them to become self-disciplined. 	
Firmness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Make it clear you expect the job will be done right and you want them to be successful. Ø Be firm without aggression. Ø With poor work; focus on what is wrong with the work rather than the person. 	
Fairness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Always aim to be fair. Ø If necessary explain the fairness behind your actions. Ø Live & teach fairness. Ø Value and expect fairness. 	
Morale Raisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Be sensitive to moods and emotions. Ø Believe happy workers = less problems. Ø Happy workers are more productive. Ø Keep your enthusiasm and energy high. 	

Trait	Description	(1-10)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø When the going is tough, make it fun. 	
<u>D. Attitudes</u>		
Willingness to Learn	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Keep learning every day. Ø Aim for constant and continuous improvement. Ø Always look out for better techniques and methods. 	
Belief in the Potential of All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Give everyone an equal opportunity. Ø Look for the potential in everyone. Ø Believe anybody can become good. Ø Don't give up on anyone who tries. Ø Give more help to those that need it most 	
Respect Given	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Start with respect for everyone. Ø Respect anyone who really tries their best. Ø Believe receiving respect comes from giving respect first. 	
Level of Empathy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Learn names and get to know each person. Ø Understand the challenges your people are facing. Ø Let them know that you feel for them – make a connection. Ø Balance the demands of the job with the care your people need. 	
Flexibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Anticipate change. Ø Make changes as soon as the need is real. Ø Base decisions on what is actually happening. Ø When one approach fails, change methods quickly. Ø Understand many quick small actions prevent big problems. 	
Self-confidence, Self-belief and Self-esteem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Know you can do your job well. Ø Understand that new challenges help you grow. Ø Act as a role model. Ø Look after yourself to keep your energy levels high. Ø Have high personal standards. 	
<u>E. Application</u>		
Consistency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ø Apply all this all day, every day. Ø How good are you on your worst day? Ø That is the measure of a Champion Performer. 	

Thank you for taking the time to complete this. Please return it to your manager.

Appendix 2: Champion Supervisor Model Key Cards

<p style="text-align: center;">Self-Starter</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use your own initiative • Direct your work yourself • Keep your targets in mind • Keep quality standards in mind 	<p style="text-align: center;">Induction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be friendly, welcoming and Informative • Gain respect and trust first, then deal with rules and responsibilities • They don't care how much you know until they know how much you care!
<p style="text-align: center;">Own the Job</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aim to have a presence rather than a loud voice • Know the rules you have to keep • Only bend rules when it is in the company's interest • Make the right decision for each circumstance 	<p style="text-align: center;">Coaching</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make a connection with each person • Know their goals, wants and needs • Help them achieve success • Nurture them so their confidence grows • The job must still be done right
<p style="text-align: center;">Loyalty</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work for the good of the business • Support your people in a way that supports the business • Ultimately loyal to management • When loyalty is given, expect to receive it 	<p style="text-align: center;">Firmness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make it clear you expect the job to be done right and you want them to be successful • Be firm without aggression • With poor work; focus on what is wrong with the work rather than the person
<p style="text-align: center;">Job Knowledge</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure you know how to do each job • Ensure you know the champion level of each job • Understand the skills & attitudes of champions 	<p style="text-align: center;">Raising Morale</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Be sensitive to moods and emotions • Believe happy workers = less problems • Happy workers are more productive • Keep your enthusiasm and energy high • When the going is tough, make it fun
<p style="text-align: center;">Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Learn key words of languages • Make a connection with each person • Use translators as a last resort • Aim to understand and be understood • Use sign language, demonstrate 	<p style="text-align: center;">Belief in the potential of all</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give everyone equal opportunity • Look for the potential in everyone • Anybody can become good • Don't give up on anyone who tries • Give more help to those that need it most

<p style="text-align: center;">Teaching Ability</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultivate a desire to teach • Find each person's learning style • Be aware who needs help • Take corrective action early 	<p style="text-align: center;">People-oriented</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think - people first: • Then - do what has to be done • Understand that success for them is success for you • Believe that your people matter
<p style="text-align: center;">Constructive correction</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Correct errors firmly Once they really know the job • Use minimum disciplinary measures that will get results • If repeated, take stronger action • Remain calm and polite • Aim for them to be self-disciplined 	<p style="text-align: center;">Trustworthy</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Earn the trust of your boss • Act from the knowledge that honesty always pays • Ensure you can be relied upon • Keep your boss informed to their satisfaction
<p style="text-align: center;">Fairness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Always aim to be fair • If necessary, explain the fairness behind your actions • Live & teach fairness • Value and expect fairness 	<p style="text-align: center;">Pride in Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep your standards very high, even when nobody sees • Do whatever it takes to reach and maintain your own standards • Congratulate yourself!
<p style="text-align: center;">Willingness to learn</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep learning every day • Aim for constant and consistent improvement • Always look out for better techniques and methods 	<p style="text-align: center;">Knowledge of Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know & understand all standards • Both written & any variations • React quickly to any change of specification • Communicate any change Promptly
<p style="text-align: center;">Respect given</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start with respect for everyone • Anyone who really tries their best deserves respect • Giving respect leads to gaining respect in return 	<p style="text-align: center;">Great Observation Skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look, See, Help (Praise/ Help/ Correct) • Catch them doing something right • Correct mistakes through teaching • Correct wrong-doing in a firm and positive way.

Level of Empathy

- Learn names and get to know everyone
- Know the challenges they are facing
- Let them know that you feel for them – make a connection
- Balance the demands of the job with the care your people need

Application

- Apply all this all day, every day
- How good are you on your worst day?
- That is the measure of a Champion Supervisor

Self-confidence, self-belief and self-esteem

- You know you can do this well
- New challenges help you grow
- Act as a role model
- Look after yourself
- Have high personal standards

Flexibility

- Anticipate change
- Make changes as soon as it is needed
- Decide based on what's really happening
- When one approach fails, change methods quickly
- Fast small actions stop big problems