

## ***THE SUPERVISORY SANDWICH***

*By Brittany Brathwaite*

Many supervisors report that they feel sandwiched between the demands of executive management and the desires of team members as they are required to perform a delicate balancing act to keep the wheels of the organization moving. The role and the importance of supervisors has increased tremendously, specifically so in the last decade, as a result of the worldwide recession. With many organizations seeking to shrink their administrative costs, the path of restructuring was and continues to be the choice for most businesses. As a result, we in the business world have increasingly noticed the merger of the middle manager role with that of the supervisory role. Previously, supervisors were only expected to directly manage the daily operations of non-managerial staff. However, as a result of the concentrated supervisory position we have seen emerging, persons in such positions have a more strategic role including:

***1) Introducing and implementing programs that are intended to carry out the broader objectives set by executives;***

As the sole medium between executive and non-managerial staff, conveying the strategic objectives of the company becomes an integral part of the supervisor's role. In addition, ensuring their consistent implementation through workable programs, all fall under the mandate of the supervisor.

***2) Ensuring the procedures and policies of the company are well-known, carried out and adhered to by non-managerial staff;***

Certifying non-managerial staff is aware of all policies and procedures and managing the process of adherence is vital. The bulk of the above responsibility falls on a supervisor whose role has been combined with that of middle managers'.

***3) Plan, direct, motivate and monitor the daily operations of staff.***

Previously, directing and monitoring the daily operations of non-managerial staff would have been the primary role of supervisor. However, many in this role are now sanctioned with finding innovative ways to keep staff motivated.

#### ***4) Acting as a liaison between executive management and non-managerial staff***

Filtering information from the top down is not the end of the chain of communication which a supervisor has to manage. He/she also undertakes reporting grievances and/or any general comments from staff to the executive level. Top down and bottom up communication is vital for the effective maintenance and functioning of any organization.

The outlined responsibilities are key in any organization, whether large or small. Thus, where a business structure is flat; that is: Executives, Supervisory Staff and Non-Managerial Staff, the role of supervisors become particularly essential. They are the sole intermediary between the higher and lower levels of staff. Therefore, they have to balance implementing the strategic policies and procedures whilst ensuring non-managerial staff remain motivated and productive. Additionally, they are often drawn from the line staff and transitioning into the new role can sometimes be challenging as they are now required to monitor their friends and colleagues.

It is important that the most adequate staff are recruited and selected for supervisory positions. The skill sets and competencies must be wider than those needed for traditional supervisory positions. In addition, continuous training and development of employees in this position is crucial. Should the individual lack any of the necessary capabilities to ably perform, there could be various detrimental effects on the organization.

The onus is therefore on the employer to continuously appraise their organizational structure. Understanding and appreciating the importance of each role within an organization is a critical step in the successful running of a business. If an employer can identify the pivotal areas of each role as briefly done above, and staff that position adequately, the efficiency of one's business has the propensity to improve.