

2008 RBC Capital Markets Best Practices Award
Andy Gothreau
Ball State University

2000 West University Ave.
Muncie, IN 47306
765-285-1834
agothreau@bsu.edu

Abstract

During the period March – November 2006, University Human Resource Services conducted two Double L (Learn and Lead) Supervisory Development Programs. The programs consisted of nine training sessions following the administering of a pre-assessment supervisory skills questionnaire. In addition to attending all Double L sessions, participants were required to select and attend two additional managerial/supervisory training sessions that were offered in the 2006-2007 Training and Development Program.

The Double L Supervisory Development Program was designed for front-line supervisors. Attendees at the initial two programs consisted of the 66 university supervisors of service personnel. While 53 supervisors did, in fact, attend all nine Double L sessions, only 37 attended the required two additional Training and Development managerial/supervisory training sessions. Reminders of the requirement to attend the latter two sessions were sent to all 53 supervisors

Approximately six months after each program was conducted, the managers of the above 53 Double L participants were requested to complete an on-line survey that contained 20 questions directly related to the achievement of specific Double L program objectives by attendees. Subsequently, Double L participants were invited to participate in a focus group session and complete the same survey.

Introduction of the Organization

Ball State University is a state-assisted doctoral institution located in Muncie, Indiana, a mid-sized Midwestern city one hour northeast of Indianapolis. The dynamic residential campus is home to more than 20,000 undergraduate and graduate students from across the country and abroad.

Ball State University began as a small, private teacher training school that opened in 1899. The early campus and buildings were purchased by the Ball brothers--five Muncie industrialists--and given to the state of Indiana in 1918.

In 1922, in recognition of the generosity of the Ball family, the Indiana General Assembly changed the school's name to Ball Teachers College. The institution became a university in 1965 in recognition of its growth in enrollment, physical facilities, and the variety and quality of its educational programs.

Ball State University's total enrollment is 20,030 students. The average class size is 31 students, and the student-to-faculty ratio is 17 to 1. About 93 percent of classes are taught by professors, not graduate students.

Enrolled students come from 48 states, two territories, 80 countries, and every Indiana county. Out-of-state students make up 10 percent of on-campus enrollment, and ethnic minorities comprise 9 percent. Ball State has more than 400 international students.

Ball State University employs approximately 3200 full time professional, faculty, staff and service personnel.

Statement of the Problem/Initiative

The role of the typical Ball State University supervisor has changed dramatically in recent years. Whereas supervisors are still responsible for producing results through others, they are faced with increased workloads, restrictive government and safety regulations, technological challenges, dispersed control, and changing demographics. To be successful, existing supervisors can no longer rely only on their prior experience. They must acquire knowledge and skills that are directed to their changing environment. In addition, they must adopt a proper mindset to ensure that they are successfully fulfilling their key role as the link between university management and employee. These requirements also apply to new supervisors when encountering unfamiliar issues involving their job, co-workers, and employees.

Objective

Provide essential knowledge and skills to improve the job performance of Ball State University staff personnel supervisors who supervise service personnel.

Assumptions

1. Staff supervisors require technical skills to effectively carry out daily management of employees.
2. Staff supervisors require interpersonal skills to communicate effectively and to lead employees.

3. Staff supervisors require a management mindset that is supportive of the university's mission, goals, and objectives.
4. Staff supervisors of bargaining unit employees require specific knowledge of union-related policies and practices.

Participants

The initial Double L participants were limited to 66 BSU staff supervisors of service personnel. The majority of these supervisors work the 1st shift (39), followed by the 2nd shift (15), 3rd shift (6), and swing shift (6).

Design

Three basic factors were considered in the development of the BSU Double L Program—time, topics, and resources. With the exception of the electives, individual training sessions were two hours in length and offered on a biweekly basis. The topics were primarily based on the following five core competencies: (1) guiding the work; (2) organizing the work; (3) developing your staff; (4) managing performance; (5) managing relations. In addition to the five core competencies, the Double L program included university-specific subjects involving policies and procedures and employee relations administration. The workshops were facilitated by in-house trainers.

Implementation

The program consisted of core (16 hours) and elective (6 hours) topics. The core topics were presented in ten sessions. The two 3-hour electives were selected by the participants from the topics that are identified as *Managerial/Supervisory Sessions* in the

2005-2006 Training and Development Program. The Double L Program commenced in March, 2006 (See Double L Course Schedule below) with biweekly core sessions.

Upon completing the Double L Program, each participant received a special certificate recognizing his/her achievement. At the same time, each participant was informed that he/she was expected to attend at least two *Managerial/Supervisory Sessions* offered through the Office of Training and Development per year for the remainder of that employee's time in that position as a form of continuing education and professional development. The employee could also take a Ball State University credit class using the Educational Assistance Program or the Fee Remission Program during the year and this class would substitute for the two managerial/supervisory sessions as long as the university class was related in some way to managerial or supervisory duties. This would be monitored by the Office of Training and Development with periodic reports being sent to appropriate managers.

Supervisory Skills Questionnaire

Prior to commencing the Double L training, all participants were required to complete a supervisory skills questionnaire. The questionnaire addressed five specific supervisory skill sets. The maximum score for each skill set was 12. Each participant was again required to complete the supervisory skills questionnaire during session #8 of the Supervisory Development Program. The average score for the Double L participants improved from 9.34 to 11.31. A t-test yielded a value of -7.198, indicating that the

difference between the average pre-test and average post-test score is statistically significant ($\alpha \leq .05$).

	Guide	Organize	Develop	Manage Performance	Manage Relations	Average
Pre	8.24	8.61	9.89	10.71	9.24	9.34
Post	11.24	11.19	11.27	11.65	11.19	11.31

Double L Survey – Managers and Participants

In November 2006 and May 2007, the managers of the Double L participants who attended all required Double L training sessions were requested to complete an on-line survey. The survey included 20 questions relating to **improvement in Double L participants' performance since attending Double L training**. The questions were directly related to the five supervisory skills sets that were addressed in the Double L training sessions.

During the focus groups that were conducted in December 2006 and May 2007, Double L participants were requested to complete the same survey. Participants were asked to indicate whether or not they felt there was an **improvement in their performance since attending Double L training**.

The following tables compare the responses of Double L managers and participants. In most cases, managers and participants felt there was a significant improvement in each of the 20 areas.

1. Show support of organizational goals

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	22	91.7%	29	90.6%
Disagree	2	8.3%		
N/A			3	9.4%

2. Get employee involved in the planning process

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	18	78.3%	26	81.3%
Disagree	5	21.7%		
N/A			6	18.7%

3. Act decisively.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	18	78.3%	26	81.3%
Disagree	5	21.7%	2	6.3%
N/A			4	12.4%

4. Make plans with specific progress review dates.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	12	50.0%	22	71.0%
Disagree	11	45.8%	4	12.9%
N/A	1	4.2%	5	16.1%

5. Set schedules to meet the organization's goals.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	16	66.7%	26	81.3%
Disagree	7	29.2%	1	3.1%
N/A	1	4.1%	5	15.6%

6. Use expertise of others to organize when necessary.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	22	91.7%	29	90.6%
Disagree	2	8.3%		
N/A			3	9.4%

7. Keep track of what's going on in the informal organization.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	19	82.6%	22	68.8%
Disagree	3	13.0%	3	9.4%
N/A	1	4.4%	7	21.8%

8. Involve others in any reorganization.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	13	54.2%	20	62.5%
Disagree	5	20.8%		
N/A	6	25.0%	12	37.5%

9. Delegate work that develops employee's skills.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	17	70.8%	30	93.8%
Disagree	5	20.8%	1	3.1%
N/A	2	8.4%	1	3.1%

10. Get to know employees on an individual basis.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	22	91.7%	29	87.9%
Disagree	2	8.3%		
N/A			4	12.1%

11. Keep employees informed about the status of their requests.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	18	75.0%	27	84.4%
Disagree	4	16.7%	1	3.1%
N/A	2	8.3%	4	12.5%

12. Make expectation for results clear when delegating tasks.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	20	83.3%	30	93.8%
Disagree	4	16.7%	1	3.1%
N/A			1	3.1%

13. Track performance and provide feedback on a continual basis.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	17	70.8%	28	87.4%
Disagree	7	29.2%	2	6.3%
N/A			2	6.3%

14. Judge performance by how it affects the organization.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	17	70.8%	26	81.3%
Disagree	7	29.2%		
N/A			6	18.7%

15. Remain objective.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	18	78.3%	27	87.1%
Disagree	5	21.7%		
N/A			4	12.9%

16. Get commitment from employees to improve their performance.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	13	54.2%	26	81.2%
Disagree	10	41.7%	3	9.4%
N/A	1	4.1%	3	9.4%

17. Keep other groups informed about plans.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	19	79.2%	28	87.5%
Disagree	4	16.7%		
N/A	1	4.1%	4	12.5%

18. Consider requests from others based on the needs of the organization.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	20	83.3%	30	93.8%
Disagree	4	16.7%		
N/A			2	6.2%

19. Become generally familiar with the work of other groups.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	17	70.8%	27	84.4%
Disagree	5	20.8%	2	6.3%
N/A	2	8.4%	3	9.3%

20. Develop professional relationships with other supervisors.

	Managers		Participants	
Agree	19	79.2%	27	84.4%
Disagree	4	16.7%	2	6.3%
N/A	1	4.1%	3	9.3%

Benefits

There was a dramatic improvement in the scores achieved by Double L participants on the pre- and post-supervisory skills questionnaire. As indicated earlier, a t-test yielded a value of -7.198, indicating that the difference between the average pre-test and average post-test score is statistically significant ($\alpha \leq .05$). This indicated a firm understanding of the following five supervisory skill sets: (1) guiding the work; (2) organizing the work; (3) developing the work; (4) managing performance; and (5) managing relations. In addition, both managers and Double L attendees affirmed a marked improvement in performance relative to Double L program objectives. This was evidenced in the responses of managers and Double L attendees to the 20-question survey that was administered to managers and Double attendees following completion of training.

Attendees at the December 2006 and May 2007 Focus Groups provided candid comments on the content and conduct of the Double L training sessions. Overall, Double L attendees were very positive. There was general agreement that the final training session, "Laws, Leaves, and Labor," required additional time, however, no other major changes were recommended. Interestingly, a number of attendees commented on the benefit of getting to know their colleagues from other departments. Some of the suggestions included the possibility of testing out of sessions, different levels of training, and departmental training.

The Double L (Learn and Lead) Supervisory Development Program was designed to posture supervisors for success at Ball State. The emphasis was on cultivating an approach to supervision that supports and reflects Ball State University goals and culture.

Attendees were encouraged to commit to making BSU a “great university.” Accordingly, “good to great” was a common theme throughout the course and Jim Collins’ bestseller by the same name was a common reference used by each of the presenters.

Other benefits of BSU staff supervisors of service personnel attending the Double L Training Program included:

- Consistency in applying BSU policies and procedures
- Adoption of positive BSU work culture
- Basic understanding of the role of the supervisor
- Reduction of discipline problems by 10%
- Reduction of grievances
- Reduction of bargaining unit issues
- Improved credibility for supervisors

Retrospect

Two programs were offered during the calendar year, and this required a great amount of time and effort from in-house resources, namely the staff that conducted the training.

Due to this demand, consideration has been given to pursuing outside resources if this program is ever offered again. Accordingly, it would not be feasible to conduct campus-wide supervisory training without the assistance of professional training consultants. This would necessitate a considerable commitment of funding for the duration of the program.