

Better SuperVision

Alberta Construction Industry's Supervisory Training Program

In 1994 Alberta's Construction Industry was moving through a transition from a period of decline into a period of heavy construction activity which would include the construction of several world class petrochemical factories, heavy oil extraction and upgrading facilities, and pulp and paper plants. In order to meet this challenge we needed to increase the quantity of supervisors in our industry, as well as better equip them to deal with supervising in today's mega project environment. Better SuperVision (BSV) was created from a vision held by a number of construction industry leaders to create a comprehensive supervisory skill development program for existing, and potential, construction supervisors that would improve our industry's ability to meet customer demand for continuous performance improvement.

Construction owners, contractors, and building trade unions worked cooperatively to develop a program which could train people in the key competencies identified by industry leaders as essential to success in improving productivity, quality and human performance in a construction or plant maintenance environment. It became clear to us from the input of hundreds of industry experts that the key to effective supervision was a combination of technical competence and the leadership abilities to motivate people in the achievement of business goals. Improving relationship building skills became a very big component of the learning in BSV.

Our core subject areas focused on communication & leadership, labour relations, planning and scheduling, quality and productivity, and safety improvement skills. This learning is achieved through a combination of 74 hours of classroom training and a three month "on the job" coaching period. Training commenced in 1995 and over the past 4 years 450 supervisors have completed this training in a variety of geographical areas, including jobsite locations, throughout Alberta. Training is delivered to people from a mix of trades and companies providing cross fertilization of ideas and allowing for team building amongst crafts.

The Better SuperVision Training Program has contributed to positive change in a number of areas. For the construction supervisor, it provides him or her with a validated skill set which can be utilized to put in place specific job site improvements that allow his crew to "work smarter, not harder". Contractors are advising that jobs being run by supervisors who have completed this training go smoother with less problems. Our construction owners/clients have noted the benefits of projects run by BSV trained supervisors and frequently request on-site delivery of this learning for the supervisors on their projects. It has also provided a readily available comprehensive training package for new supervisors in a time of high growth in our industry.

Better SuperVision has become so successful that we have now licensed other joint labour and management groups to deliver Better SuperVision in British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and Newfoundland. We have also developed a 2½ day companion program, known as Leadership Links, intended for project managers and superintendents which facilitates effective implementation of Better SuperVision skills.

BSV has been a cooperative effort involving labour, management, and owners, all with vested interests in improving how the "people part" of our business delivers cost effective construction. Construction supervisors from different trades now benefit from a set of supervisory skills and knowledge that they hold in common, which contributes to the coordination and integration of a multi-trade construction site.

Contact: Ron Cherlet • Construction Labour Relations Alberta • 10949 120 St.
Edmonton, Alberta T5H 3R2 • Canada • (780) 451-5444 • Fax 451-5447

The complete Better SuperVision training process consists of the following three parts:

Part I - Better Super Vision Classroom Training:

Module I - Leadership & SuperVision

1. *The Basic Tool Kit*
2. *Direction and Feedback*
3. *Active Listening*
4. *Resolving Disagreements*
5. *Able and Willing People*
6. *Leader as Coach*

Module II - Agreements That Work

1. *Contract Terms*
2. *People Problems*
3. *Tough Interviews*

Module III- Planning To Be Productive

1. *Project Plans and Schedules*
2. *Planning For The Crew*
3. *Planning For You*

Module IV- Productivity, Quality & People

1. *Our Industry New Directions*
2. *Quality Ways*
3. *Quality Tools*
4. *Involving People*
5. *Improving Work Processes*
6. *Growing Crews Into Teams*

Part II - Safety Supervisors Skills:

In addition to the four modules outlined above, candidates are asked to complete a recognized supervisory safety skills training program. The program recommended by the Better SuperVision Administrative Committee is Leadership for Safety Excellence which is offered through the Alberta Construction Safety Association, and a number of building trade union halls in Alberta.

Part III –“On the Job” Performance Check-Off

In order to facilitate the transfer of Better SuperVision skills to the real work world, all candidates are asked to complete, with their immediate supervisor, a “on the job” performance check-off over a three month period. Candidates who are unemployed at the time of taking the program will be responsible for ensuring that the on the job performance check-off is completed at a later date when they are working as a supervisor.

Certification:

Better SuperVision candidates receive a certificate and seals which recognize successful completion of the three phases of the Better SuperVision program.