

Supervising vs. Coaching

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Most of us have grown up in a world where we are either a supervisor or we are being supervised. Think about it...our parents supervised us, our teachers in school supervised us, our bosses supervised us. Perhaps we became the parent, teacher or boss, thus stepping into the supervisory role. We have taken the supervisory role into the ministry as well.

A supervisor is usually the one coming up with the vision, mission and direction. All though they may solicit help from others, because the buck stops with them, supervisors are the ones who clarify goals and objectives. Supervisors are usually the ones who call the meeting, set the agenda, and direct the meeting.

Supervisor vs. Coach

As the idea and function of coaching is becoming more popular, supervisors are beginning to review and reconfigure their roles in their organization. Pastors and network leaders are also being challenged to take on more of a coaching role. The question arises "Can supervisors be coaches?"



The very nature of coaching is the antithesis to supervising. The coach's role is specifically to *not* set the vision, goals or agenda. It is the one being coached who does this. The coach is called to come along side to help someone else discover God's agenda for their life and ministry and help to see that become a reality. As coaches, our role is not to tell people where they're going or what they need to do, or even to answer their questions. Rather it is to ask good questions to help them discover the path for themselves. Further a coach doesn't decide the goals ahead of time and come to the coaching session to solicit help with the coach's goals. A good coach must lay aside their goals and allow the person being coached to develop their own goals.

Another challenge is that the supervisor usually holds the purse strings. In many cases, the supervisor has power over the subordinate in relation to their salary or even in keeping their job. Because of this, as a subordinate, we hesitate to share the things we struggle with either personally or in our ministry role.

I have found this especially true in coaching church planters whose salary depends on success and is often tied very closely to expectations of performance. They feel more free to share their challenges with a coach who has no strings attached to their finances.

Coaching Plus Supervision

So, can you coach those for whom you are also their supervisor? We all wear different 'hats' even in a given situation. If we are clear and intentional about which hat we are wearing, it is possible to function in different roles with the same people. At the very least we can begin to focus more on helping people discover their own path rather than secunding them into ours.

However the challenge remains. You will need to evaluate your own role and personal expectations and consider each relationship on its own merit. In some cases you will do well to encourage the coachee to find a different coach while you remain as supervisor. The same considerations need to be evaluated if you are looking for a coach.

The **coaching tool** on the next page will help you evaluate your role of supervisor or coach.

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Supervising and Coaching Evaluation

Consider the different roles of the supervisor and the coach:

- 1) Which list exemplifies your present role?
- 2) How would you like your role to change?
- 3) Which relationships do you feel you could successfully coach?
- 4) In which relationships do you need to remain primarily in the supervisory role?

Supervisor	Coach
Clarifies and articulates the vision	Asks questions to help coachee clarify vision
Develops goals to achieve vision	Asks to help coachee develop goals
Solicits help from those they supervise to accomplish goals	Works with coachees to see them accomplish their own goals.
Sets the agenda for the meeting	Asks coachee to set agenda
Operates in a 'telling' mode	Asks questions
Answers questions	Helps coachees discover their own answers
Gives advice	Points coachee toward resources