



Retreat Roundtable: Developing Frontline Supervisors

June 2019

Context for Today's Discussion

PROBLEM

- A REDF portfolio Social Enterprise (SE) commissioned a **benchmarking study** of commercial organizations to uncover **commercial best practices** in organization design and processes for crew-based teams as an input for its own improvement process
- The SE contracts with customers to provide grounds-keeping, road maintenance, light construction, facilities and other services through **transitional work crews**
- The SE relies heavily on the role of **Crew Supervisor** to execute against the “social” (training, life coaching) and the “enterprise” (contract execution) aspects of the organization
- The organization has experienced difficulty with **identifying job markets, recruiting suitable candidates, onboarding new hires, and retaining staff** in the crew supervisor role

PROJECT

- Goal: Learn best practices from private sector to benchmark against SE's approach
- Interview experts from 6 relevant industries that operate with low skilled crews
- Literature review on crew management strategies
- Define framework to assess and improve crew management in SE

The benchmarking study found that most commercial organizations characterize supervision across two dimensions: technical and managerial

	Technical Supervisor	Both	Managerial Supervisor
Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinforce daily metrics Manage tactics of day-to-day work to accomplish the goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Transfer knowledge to direct subordinates Improve crew performance Communicate performance to upper management Receive training 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Determine crew objectives aligned with organization objectives Monitor performance, and communicate goals
Organize	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Break down the work into manageable tasks Assign crew members 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Classify work required for each client, selecting people for the management of the units and for the job to be done
Motivate	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Encourage crew members to execute the work 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Make people decisions (pay, placement, promotion) Support employees through coaching and performance management
Develop	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure work crew achieves technical competency Provide training on equipment and tools 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify training opportunities to ensure career progression for crew members, including both classroom training and more complex work experience

ILLUSTRATIVE EXAMPLES

Custodial Services

Shift Supervisor: oversees morning shift of 10 staff, executes the work alongside team, schedules team members, assists team members with unfamiliar tasks

Fast Food

Crew Trainer: expert in all responsibilities of the work, works alongside team, provides assistance and guidance to crew for tasks

Auto Manufacturing

Area Team Lead: expert in specific line area, organizing work and training others

Source: Expert Interviews

Custodial Services

Shift Manager: onsite with crews though does not execute work; resolves contract, account, and people issues; provides longer-term performance review

Fast Food

Shift Supervisor: responsible for execution of shift goals, maintains invoices for the shift, mitigates problems with Crew Trainer

Auto Manufacturing

Area Crew Supervisor: oversees multiple factory / line areas, ensuring execution of quality and safety metrics

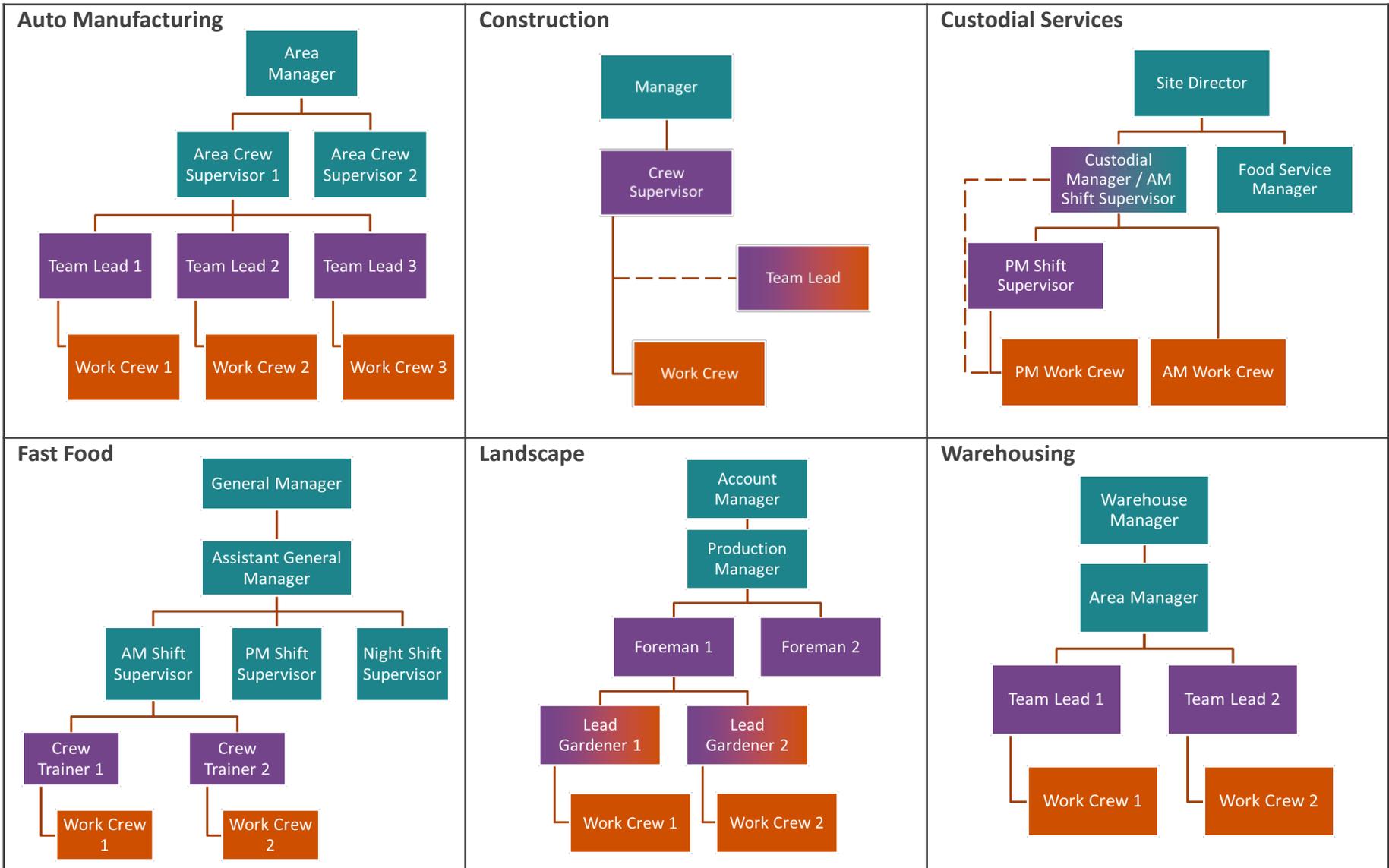
Technical and managerial supervision differ on the degree of industry expertise and people management knowledge required

- If the work required from the team is fairly straightforward and low in complexity, one individual could execute both technical and managerial supervision responsibilities
- However, if the work requires industry knowledge and is high in complexity, technical and managerial supervision responsibilities are typically split between two or more roles
- Dividing responsibilities allows technical supervisors to work more closely with crew members at the work site for quality assurance, while managerial supervisors concentrate on developing teams and strategy execution

	Technical Supervisor	Managerial Supervisor
Common skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Organizing activities or tasks related to a client or project outcome• Allocating the right amount of workforce to each activity or task• Securing proper resources (physical, financial, or human capital) from upper management to execute the activities or tasks• Operating relevant equipment or machinery• Training others on how to execute a task, including what equipment or machinery is necessary• Diagnosing work hazards and safety risks associated with work tasks• Identifying inefficient ways of working and mitigating for optimal use of resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overseeing overall objectives for work content, determining metrics and goals for work crew tied to overall enterprise strategy• Managing crew scheduling across contracts according to resourcing needs• Budgeting resources across contracts• Reviewing technical performance of work crews against contract objectives• Providing work crews with professional development opportunities, coaching, and non-task related training (e.g., communication skills, etc.)• Managing payroll• Mitigating disputes between client and work crew and within work crew

Source: Expert Interviews

Organization Chart Summaries



Sources: Expert Interviews

Key:

- = technical supervision
- = managerial supervision and upper management
- = hybrid technical supervisor and work crew
- = hybrid technical and managerial supervisor
- = work crew

Key Takeaways and Potential Solutions for Consideration

- Crew supervisor roles at the SE are a hybrid of technical and managerial, and **compensation and support has not been sufficient** based on the complexity of the role
- **Intentionally defining and categorizing responsibilities** on the technical vs. managerial spectrum can help define the complexity of a role
- The SE is now testing **splitting out certain responsibilities** among different roles/levels
- If splitting out responsibilities is not feasible, the org can focus additional attention on **intentional recruitment, performance management, and training** for a hybrid role
- **Key questions when analyzing frontline supervisor role:**
 - What is the complexity of the role?
 - Do the responsibilities require managerial, technical or hybrid supervisor?
 - Is there a match between the managerial/technical components of the job and the compensation and training provided to the supervisor ?
 - If coaching and mentoring frontline workers and liaising with external partners is a key responsibility, are these skills hired for or trained internally?

For Discussion

- Is crew supervisor recruitment, retention, and/or performance **a problem in your organization faces?**
- Does this **framework of managerial vs. technical** help you think about or frame the issue? If so, how?
- Does your organization have any **best practices** regarding the crew (frontline) supervisor role?
- Does your organization have the **right allocation of responsibilities?**
- How does your organization currently **select talent or provide training** based on the mix of technical and managerial skills required?
- Would there be value in **segmenting these responsibilities** across multiple roles? What would be barriers to this practice?