

Real Supervisor Conversations:

Practical Conversation Examples for New Leaders in the Corrugated Packaging Industry

Stepping into a supervisor role often means having conversations that can feel uncomfortable at first. Whether you're addressing performance, attendance, safety, or conflict, the goal is not to "win" the conversation, it's to communicate clearly, maintain respect, and help move the team forward. These examples are designed to provide simple frameworks and realistic language new supervisors can adapt to their own leadership style and workplace culture.

Addressing Attendance Issues

Situation: An employee has been arriving late multiple times over the past few weeks.

Example Conversation:



Supervisor: Hey Mike, thanks for meeting with me. I wanted to talk about your attendance. Over the last two weeks, you've been late several times, and I need you here and ready to go at shift start.

Employee: Yeah, mornings have been rough lately.



I understand things happen, but when someone is late, it impacts production and the rest of the crew. Is there something going on that we should discuss?

I've been dealing with some childcare issues.



I appreciate you being honest with me. Let's talk through what's realistic moving forward, but I also need to be clear that attendance expectations still apply.

Leadership Tips:

- Address issues early before they become habits
- Stay calm and professional
- Focus on behavior and impact, not personality
- Listen, but maintain accountability

Giving Constructive Feedback

Situation: An employee's work has been inconsistent.

Example Conversation:



Supervisor: I wanted to talk with you about some recent quality issues we've been seeing. I've noticed an increase in setup mistakes over the last few shifts.

Employee: I didn't realize it was becoming a problem.



I know you care a lot about doing good work, which is why I wanted to bring it to your attention early. Let's walk through where the issues are happening and figure out how we can improve consistency moving forward.

Giving Constructive Feedback

Leadership Tips:

- Address the behavior, not the person
- Be specific with examples
- Keep the conversation solution focused
- Recognize the strengths while correcting issues

Transitioning from Coworker to Supervisor

Situation: A former peer expects special treatment after your promotion.

Example Conversation:

Employee: Come on, you can let this one slide. We've worked together forever.



Supervisor: I value our relationship, but part of my job now is making sure expectations are applied fairly across the team. I need to stay consistent with everyone.

So, things are different now?



Some things are, yes. I still respect working alongside you, but now I also have a responsibility to the entire team.

Leadership Tips:

- Acknowledge the relationship honestly
- Stay respectful and calm
- Avoid favoritism
- Consistency builds credibility

Handling Resistance to Change

Situation: Employees are frustrated about a new process or procedure.

Example Conversation:

Employee: We've always done it the old way, and it worked fine.



Supervisor: I understand the frustration. Change can be difficult, especially when routines have worked for a long time. But this process is being implemented to improve efficiency and reduce issues we've been seeing.

Well, it's slowing us down.



That feedback is important, and I want to hear what concerns you have. At the same time, we still need to move forward with the new process and work together to make it successful.

Leadership Tips:

- Listen without becoming defensive
- Explain the "why" behind the change
- Stay consistent with expectations
- Encourage feedback while maintaining direction

Recognizing Strong Performance

Situation: An employee has stepped up and taken initiative.

Example Conversation:



Supervisor: I wanted to recognize the way you handled the machine issue yesterday. You stayed calm, communicated well with the team, and helped keep things moving.

Employee: Thanks, I appreciate that!



That kind of leadership and initiative makes a big difference. Keep it up.

Leadership Tips:

- Praise publicly when appropriate
- Be specific about what the employee did well
- Recognition builds morale and engagement
- Positive feedback is just as important as corrective feedback

Final Reminder

Strong supervisors are not expected to have every answer immediately. Leadership is a skill developed through communication, consistency, accountability, and continuous learning.

Every conversation is an opportunity to build trust, strengthen your team, and shape the culture around you.

Find more resources at www.careersincorrugated.com.

