



**Comm
Center
Supervisor
Q&A**

With Sue Pivetta

Winging It!



ABOUT YOUR AUTHOR

In 1976 Sue Pivetta began her career in emergency communications as a graveyard dispatcher in a small agency. After one year, the agency combined into a multi-jurisdictional comm center. After five years she became a working supervisor. During these time the agency went through many of the changes your agencies are going through. There was no training, assistance, guidance or support for supervisors—she was winging it for sure. During her work as a supervisor Sue faced many of the problems you do today. When she left the agency she became an instructor for a college 9-1-1 program. Her college career resulted in Sue authoring many books and expanded her contacts in the industry to include national and international exposure. Her networking led to consulting job and extensive contact with other professional leaders.

Sue's lifetime volunteer activities have provided an extensive history of providing leadership. After authoring the '9-1-1 Puzzle' course and book for NENA she convinced NENA there was a desperate need for information about leadership—her passion. In 2002 Sue wrote and taught the 9-1-1 Leadership course. Her studies over many years produced a vast understanding of what it takes to be a leader.

In Sue's personal life she has worked for the Governors Task Force on Education, Board of Directors for non profits, and as a volunteer community mediator for the courts and dispute resolution. Any time there is a need for leadership—Sue is willing. She is currently heading an artist group in an effort to draw her own community together. She has volunteered to teach creativity to women in prisons. She is a business owner and manager and continues to study leadership with a passion. In addition, her six children and five grandchildren fine tune her leadership with everyday life demands and events.

Over the years at her company Professional Pride Sue has consulted with, trained and mentored supervisors. Her professional friendships and relationships have resulted in an clear understanding of what supervisors face in the real world. She believes that 'theory' isn't enough and at times the questions supervisors call and email to her are compelling and need answers. We know you are great at winging it but we can all use a little motivation and support when those wings get tires. We at Professional Pride encouraged Sue to put together the questions she has gathered over the years into this needed document. We sincerely hope that you find this reading relevant and useful for as Sue says, "We are all angels with one wing, we need each other to fly."




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Question

“Sometimes I feel like I have pressure from both sides and I’m not sure what my role is here. It’s frustrating and I’m not sure where I fit?”



Answer

Sandwich meat! That is what we could refer your supervisory role as—but, since it might be difficult to continue to suggest you are peanut butter, we’ll instead refer to this position as the **Middle**. Not middle as in a higher value than bottom. Middle as median (or mean) is determined by adding up the whole and finding the dividing point – which is essentially the middle. The middle is the center, the center of the body is the heart. The middle is where a person focuses, the strongest central point, there is middle in the core of anything. The supervisor in the comm center is the hub of the wheel. These conversations are about your role as a leader in the middle.

Think on the subject of the supervisory role as ‘middle’ at your agency. Without the middle of anything— there would be no cohesion, holding together, way to bring everything together to function properly,. So it is with the **comm center supervisor**. The supervisor is the focal point of the agency. The supervisor is accountable to both sides — which is often the most challenging part of the work.

QUESTION 1

You have many responsibilities and many challenges. You also have the great reward of providing leadership. Not everyone can be a great leader, not everyone wants to be a great leader. Many people want the position but not the awesome responsibility of the work of being a supervisor. And although the work may differ according to the type of agency where you work, the leadership component is the same. A supervisor is a leader and there is much to learn about leadership—you can even take college courses on leadership.

How many times have you thought, “My job would be great if...?” In some way, shape or form, that big if involves other people changing. Or perhaps not, maybe it’s technology, or the budget or the weather. You can see, being the middle person doubles your trouble—so to speak. But being the middle can also double your rewards If you are empowered to do the job effectively. Take some time to think about how you fit in by considering what you have promised to do for either side of the equation—what was that promise. Knowing that will help you know that your allegiance is to neither side but to this promise.



There's nothing more demoralizing than a leader who can't clearly articulate why we're doing what we're doing. — Posner

Question

“It seems like there are so many different demands from people and for things to get done. How can I look at all this in a more positive light?”



Answer

There are many sides to your work; such as the people side and the paper side or the leadership side and the management side. Paperwork is the tangible, people the intangible. Leadership is ‘intangible’ while management is tangible. Both are needed but often we are better at one side than the other—it can be challenging. Perhaps the metaphor of a computer may be useful.

Hardware is tangible, software is intangible. One cannot exist without the other. Hardware needs software to enable it to do anything but sit on the desk. And software is useless sitting inside a colorful box. So it is with leadership and management. You are both a leader and a manager and one cannot exist without the other.

How you became supervisor is not relevant. What is significant is if you have opened your *gift of leadership* and if you have made the

QUESTION 2

promise to engage in *management*? Together, fully explored and understood, both leadership and management can result in a dynamic career that will bring your agency and you many rewards.

Those who opened their leadership gift at birth made a promise to serve (provide leadership) whenever and wherever needed in their lifetime. These are the people who are volunteering, pushing for change, organizing or showing the way. You may be one of these people, often referred to as ‘pains’.. Nevertheless you can see that leadership is about the passion for change and leading people to a higher ground. Still there are leadership tasks that do not involve people.

Management is a passion for processes, procedures, getting things done in an orderly manner. Although both leadership and management are two parts of a whole—they are also complete within their scope. This means that you could in effect hire two people to do the work of one supervisor—a manager and a leader. Still if that were to happen the two would need to work in compliment. You can see that your work as supervisor can be diverse, interesting and demanding. Take great care to pay some attention to ‘balance’ so you don’t feel either side is dragging you down—people can try to monopolize your time—you just have to be clear about your boundaries and lead them towards more self-empowerment.



Inventories can be managed, but people must be led. — Perot