
What Would Mac Do?
Vol. 1.

Dear Mac, I am a Surgeon in a McMaster teaching centre. I feel I had great training and I am a very good surgeon. However, I find it challenging to supervise the staff in my clinic. Sometimes, I don't think I am effective at having the staff organize and run the clinic in the ways that I think would work well. Can you help me become more effective?

Being an effective supervisor is an important part of being a surgeon, but, you're right — very few of us have had the requisite training to develop those skills. Surgeons — and many other medical practitioners, for that matter — are seemingly expected to inherently know basic management strategy. Luckily, surgeons are typically fast learners, and there are several free resources available to help you hone your supervisory skills, including some here at McMaster University.

The **McMaster Centre for Continuing Education** is a great place to start. While they offer a long list of helpful courses, the one I recommend for you is called “**Supervision Essentials**.”

This one-day course will provide you with a foundational overview of many critical supervisory skills, including understanding your role as supervisor, identifying your leadership style and how to put it to work, and enhancing people practices such as motivating others, interviewing qualified candidates for job vacancies, giving constructive feedback, and addressing performance issues. It will also touch on how to delegate effectively and responsibly and teach you how to lead productive meetings.

The course is taught by Linda Spence, who holds an Honours B.A. in Business Administration from the Richard Ivey School of Business at Western University and is a member of the Human Resources Professional Association (HRPA). Her insight will no doubt prove useful on your quest to becoming a better manager.

The course is offered several times during the year, however, the next available session is **Tuesday, June 6, 2018**. Please note that you must register at least **two weeks prior** to the course, but spots fill up fast so I'd recommend registering even earlier than that. Speaking of registration, it's not only easy to register, but it's also completely free. That's right — the Department of Surgery covers all costs associated with continuing education programs. Just visit **McMasterCCE.ca**, and follow their very easy steps from there.

There are also a few great blogs available online for free that can help with your supervision skills. One that I frequent is called “**HR Bartender**.” Run by Sharlyn Lauby, an HR pro who, before her blog took off, worked as a Professor at Florida Atlantic University, HR Bartender is a forum for workplace struggles. While she often touches on supervision in her posts, what originally drew me to her site was a 2014 post entitled “**10 Tips for First-Time Supervisors**.” Here, she cuts to the chase and lays her advice out in an easily digestible format.

Finally, I recommend owning your deficiencies. **Writing to me** is a great first step, but try **reaching out to your colleagues or your mentors**. If they're not feeling the same way, surely at one point they were. Pick their brain for different ideas, tactics, and approaches — one short conversation might have a lasting impact on your managerial skill set.

At the end of the day, you shouldn't feel alone in your supervisory self-consciousness. Whether you're content with your abilities or not, it's in any surgeon's best interest to seek improvement of their management skills. In addition to being a leading medical expert,



Meet Mac.

Mac is a new Department recruit who's here to help you with the many hard-to-answer questions that come with being a surgeon. From operating room specifics to admin duties and management, there's no topic too tricky for our in-house surgical expert. The next time you're feeling stressed, anxious, overwhelmed, or generally confused, ask yourself, “*What Would Mac Do?*”

you're expected to be a great supervisor — you have to manage clinical teams, research assistants, administrative staff, and more. You're expected to do all of this during an ever-changing era with more challenges than ever before. As you surely know from your time in the operating room, the ability to strike the right balance between people management and task management is an essential ingredient to achieving outstanding performance. If you can achieve that in your office setting as well, then all of your qualms about supervising will become things of the past.

Want your questions answered? Email your queries to cturner@mcmaster.ca.