

# Supervisor Development Course (SDC-R)

2017 - Current

Project Leader: Benjamin Nye



## Background

United States Army military and civilian supervisors who manage civilian employees must complete the Supervisor Development Course (SDC) upon appointment, and then every three years after that to keep their skills fresh. The original SDC online course focused on standardizing course content for supervisors across the Army, and the SDC provided quality information for new and experienced supervisors. While the SDC online content was informative, thorough, and helped to standardize the lesson material Army wide, it required nearly 40 hours and had challenges with engagement.

The Army recognized the need to create new content and application exercises that better engaged learners, and reduced the amount of time supervisors spend to meet refresher training requirements. The Acquisition Support Center (ASC) funded an effort at ICT to see if there was a digital-first, learning sciences-based, solution.

## Objectives

ICT researchers developed a prototype, tested it, ran studies, published papers, and then rolled out an industry-ready solution which met the following requirements: decreasing delivery time while refining instructional integrity, increasing interactivity within the constraints of an online learning environment, evaluating performance, and integrating SDC-R software with the Army Learning Management System (ALMS).

## Results

The final result was called the Supervisor Development Course – Refresher (SDC-R) - and it is still being used by the Army. Compared to the original course, SDC-R reduced the time to master the content by using interactive learning and placement tests to minimize over-training known material. SDC-R is a web-based course with lessons that focus on supervising Civilian employees. There are 17 lessons organized into the following 5 modules: Course Introduction; Foundation of a Supervisor; Employee and Performance Management; Dealing with Misconduct; Labor and Employee Relations. Each module is broken down into four parts: a pretest, a module introduction video, content lessons, and a graded practical exercise. Lesson guides are available for download and use for future reference.

The course is designed to meet the National Defense Authorization Act of 2010 mandate that all supervisors of

Army Civilians (both Military and Civilian) receive supervisory training every three (3) years. This course is to be taken on the 3rd and subsequent years after completion of the initial Supervisor Development Course (SDC).

In an ICT study (2017) in collaboration with The Army Management Staff College, the majority of participants (74%) completed the SDC-R in less than 10 hours (5-7 hours). CVIT SDC-R used adaptive and engaging training to reduce the time required, which produced equivalent learning outcomes on post-tests. On engagement surveys, 81% of learners agreed with “I would recommend this course to others” and 38% who strongly agreed (11% higher than the original SDC). Similarly, learners in SDC-R reported greater attention and effectiveness. . Originally, this course had a mandate of a compulsory 40 hours. By streamlining and improving the course, it saved over 97,000 hours within its first full year.

In 2018, ICT produced a report: ICT Army Supervisor Development Course: Time, Money Saved (2016 - June 2018) with the following results:

- Total number of graduates: 2,949
- Total hours spent in SDC-R:  $2949 * 7 = \text{approx. } 20,643$
- Total hours in original SDC course:  $2949 * 40 = \text{approx. } 117,960$
- Hours saved using SDC-R: 97,317
- (Saved ~\$2.9m in < 2 years, assuming \$30 personnel hours in pay+direct benefits)

These savings equate to millions of dollars every year, and continue to do so, as the course continues to be used by the Army:

- SDC-R serves the 18,000 employees who require SDC refresher training each year
- The course has streamlined what was a repetitive 40 hrs to 10 hrs with the same learning objectives
- Savings of up to 540,000 hrs / year compared to repeating the SDC course

## Next Steps

The course has been live from 2017 and continues to serve as the way to satisfy every-3-year requirement for those in the United States Army who supervise civilians.

Published academic research papers are available from <https://ict.usc.edu/research/publications>  
(Search engine keyword: USC ICT Publications)

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