A.I.D.
MANAGEMENT SKILLS COURSE

TRAINING RESOURCES GROUP
1021 Prince Street
Alexandria, Virginia 22314

ISN= 88567

USAID
Management Skills Course

1. Course Schedule and Objectives
2. The Role of The Manager
   Management Functions
3. Communication
4. Conceptualizing
5. Collaborative Work Organization
6. Monitoring/Performance Feedback
7. Problem Solving/Conflict Resolution
8. Team Effectiveness
9. Decision Making
   Representational
   Staff Development
10. Planning for Back Home Application

OBJECTIVES
MANAGEMENT SKILLS COURSE

As a result of your participation in the course, you should be able to:

- clearly describe the role you play as a manager in AID,
- use specific communication skills which will help you achieve desired results with staff and colleagues,
- develop and convey a sense of vision for your unit,
- work with others to plan and organize work collaboratively.
- monitor individual work performance and provide feedback which will help improve staff performance,
- successfully manage conflict arising out of work situations,
- make more effective use of meetings, and
- consider those steps you want to take to apply what you have learned in the course to your back-home situation.

AID Management Skills Course

Course Schedule

All sessions are from 8:30-12:15; 1:30-5:15 and 5:30-7:00 unless otherwise noted.

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
	Role of the Manager Management Functions	Communication Conceptualizing	Monitoring/ Performance Feedback	Communication Meeting Effectiveness	Action Planning
3-6:00	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch	Lunch
Introductions Course Overview *Objectives *Schedule Opening Remarks	Management Functions (cont'd) Communication	Collaborative Work Organization	Performance Feedback (cont'd)	Problem Solving/ Conflict Resolution	Action Planning Evaluation Closure 4 p.m.
	Break	Break	Break	Break	
	Communication (cont'd)	Collaborative Work Organization (cont'd)	Performance Feedback (cont'd)	Conflict Resolution (cont'd)	

AID MANAGEMENT SKILLS COURSE

Note to Participants

The AID Management Skills Course (MSC) has been designed specifically for AID managers who want to improve their management skills. The course is organized around ten management functions which have been identified as those which are carried out by managers in AID. These management functions are:

- Communication
- Conceptualizing
- Collaborative Work Organization
- Monitoring/Performance Feedback
- Problem Solving/Conflict Resolution
- Team Effectiveness
- Technical
- Decisionmaking
- Representational
- Staff Development

The five day course has sessions specifically devoted to Communication, Conceptualizing, Collaborative Work Organization, Monitoring/Performance Feedback, Problem Solving/Conflict Resolution, and Team Effectiveness. The major emphasis of the course is on helping participants understand the role and function of the manager, and on learning and practicing the interpersonal skills that are necessary to carry out these management functions.

You can expect to be highly involved in the activities of the training course. The curriculum is organized to strenghten your skills in each key functional area by:

- presentation of management theory or models through lectures, the use of personal questionnaires or inventories, and written articles.
- discussion of key principles in that functional area, often through the use of an AID-specific, multi-part case study;

- practicing newly learned skills through the use of role plays and critical incidents, based in large part on real back home situations; and,

- structured individual planning of how newly learned skills and concepts will be used to resolve specific back home problems.

The course is based on the assumption that training can be seen as effective only if it improves the on-the-job performance of participants. The course will expose you to ideas which may be new to you. While this new awareness is valuable, the intention of the course is to give you an opportunity to go beyond awareness and actually build new skills. You will find that the course encourages your thinking about yourself as a manager, and depends on your active participation in sessions. You will become involved in work on real situations which you bring to the course.

This workbook provides:

- Course organization - The Workbook is organized around the course schedule and provides a way to organize your notes for each course session.

- Reading material - Throughout the week, various course sessions will draw on specific articles. Following this Note is a list of articles of all the reading material and when you should read it in order to prepare yourself for the following day's session.

  The Workbook includes both "required" and optional reading. The "required" material will be referred to directly and used in course sessions, while the optional articles are intended for background reading and for reinforcement after you have returned to your job. Each section indicates whether material is required or optional reading.

- Handouts - Much of the course material, including parts to a progressive multi-part case study will be distributed in particular sessions. The Workbook is designed to allow you to organize these materials in specific sections.

- Planning for Work Application - The last section of the Workbook will contain all the materials developed during the course which will be used to prepare a plan for improving management in your work situation. The Workbook will serve as a resource and reference upon returning to your job.

AID Management Skills Course

READING ASSIGNMENTS FROM PARTICIPANT WORKBOOK

SUNDAY NIGHT

Complete Course Prework including reading:

1. Chapter 30, "What Makes a Manager," and Chapter 31, "The Manager and his Work" from Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices by Peter Drucker, Harper and Row, 1973.

2. "What Effective General Managers Really Do," by John P. Kotter, Harvard Business Review, November-December 1982.

MONDAY NIGHT

Required

1. "Creating a Vision of Greatness: The First Step Toward Empowerment," from The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work by Peter Block, Jossey-Bass, 1986. (Section 4)

Optional

1. "Transforming Leadership," from In Search of Excellence, by Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr.. Harper and Row, 1982. (Section 4)

2. "The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact," by Henry Mintzberg. Harvard Business Review, July-August, 1975. (Section 2)

3. "Using MBO as a Supervisory Tool," Unpublished paper by James R. Brady. March, 1987. (Section 5)

TUESDAY NIGHT

Required

1. "Performance Planning," from Performance Planning and Appraisal, by Patricia King. McGraw-Hill, 1984. (Section 5)

2. "Using Feedback to Improve Performance and Enhance Motivation," unpublished paper by James McCaffery, 1987. (Section 6)

Optional

1. "Interim Followup," from Performance Planning and Appraisal, by Patricia King. (Section 6)

2. "Preparing for the Appraisal Interview," from Performance Planning and Appraisal, by Patricia King. (Section 6)

WEDNESDAY NIGHT

Required

1. "Involvement Skills" (Section 3)

2. "How to Run a Meeting," by Antony Jay. Harvard Business Review, March-April, 1976. (Section 8)

3. "The Art of Creative Fighting" by H.B. Karp, from the 1983 Annual for Facilitators, Trainers and Consultants. (Section 7)

THURSDAY NIGHT

Required

1. "Definitions and Characteristics of High Performing Systems, unpublished paper by Peter B. Vaill. (Section 8)

2. "What Comes After the Management Skills Course," adapted from an article in the second AID Management Skills Course Newsletter. (Section 8)

Optional

1. "Synergy In Team Management, from Managing Cultural Differences, by Philip R. Harris and Robert T. Moran. (Section 8)

OTHER OPTIONAL READING

DECISION MAKING

"Utilizing Human Resources: Individual Versus Group Approaches to Problem Solving and Decision Making," by John J. Sherwood and Florence M. Hoylman. The 1978 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators. (Section 9)

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

"You Want Me to Do What?," by Pamela Jones, Beverly Kaye, and Hugh R. Taylor. Training and Development Journal, July, 1981. (Section 9)

REPRESENTATIONAL

"Managing Your Boss," by John J. Gabbaro and John P. Kotter. Harvard Business Review, January-February, 1980. (Section 9)

TRAINING RESOURCES GROUP

GENERAL BACKGROUND

Founded in 1973, Training Resources Group (TRG) provides organization development and training services to public and private sector clients in the United States and overseas.

TRG is a small business devoted exclusively to designing and implementing innovative approaches to human resource development. It combines research and design activities with the delivery of results-oriented institutional and organizational development services and ongoing training workshops.

TRG has provided services to clients in both federal and state governments including the U.S. Agency for International Development, the Patent Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture, the Peace Corps, the U.S. Navy, the Internal Revenue Service, the Department of State, the Federal Emergency Management Agency, and to state government agencies in California and New York. TRG also provides training services to the World Bank and the Organization of American States.

Internationally, TRG has worked in more than 40 countries, including the Philippines, Thailand, the United Kingdom, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, the People's Republic of China, Nepal, Bolivia, Tanzania, Lesotho, Kenya, Botswana, Guatemala, Tunisia, Senegal, Egypt, and Antigua. In many cases, this work has been directly with the governments of developing countries.

TRG corporate clients have included DuPont, Wang Labs, Digital Equipment Corporation, Camp Dresser & McKee, Apollo Inc., Dow Chemical Company, Xerox, the Chase Bank, ABC-TV, Westin Hotels, Quaker Oats, Young & Rubicam, Ciba-Geigy, Occidental Petroleum, and Coca-Cola.

EXAMPLES OF TRG SERVICES TO CLIENTS

TRG provides clients with traditional human resource development services in the following areas:

Management Training

TRG's focus in management training has been for top and middle level managers in various organizations in private industry, in developing countries and with government agencies in the U.S. It has structured a practical approach to management training which includes learning how to work with people, how to manage within the culture of the organization, how to build teams, how to use time, how to increase meeting effectiveness, how to make decisions, and how to organize and plan work. Communication skills for managers are also an integral part of TRG's approach.

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Currently, TRG is in its second three-year contract with the Agency for International Development to deliver management skills training to middle managers in AID missions overseas, and in Washington. TRG is also completing a three year contract to deliver the Senior Management Course to top level AID managers, including the directors and deputies of all AID missions and offices. To date, TRG has conducted over 30 Management Skills Courses for middle level managers, including courses provided exclusively for a single mission. Twelve Senior Management Courses will be carried out. Since 1984, TRG has provided management training to over 1100 AID management personnel.

Other examples of TRG's work in providing training for managers includes the Foreign Service Institute of the Department of State. During the last two summers, TRG delivered the management training course to 70 new Deputy Chiefs of Mission. who were going into the field and to Administrative Officers.

As a part of its project work in AID, TRG has provided a variety of management programs including designing and conducting a year long executive development program for the thirty top managers in the National Water Supply and Drainage Board in Sri Lanka, carrying out management training in the health ministries in several West African countries, and conducting management training for the agriculture ministries in Bolivia and Kenya.

Institution/Organization Development

TRG work in this area consists of organizational problem-solving, training systems development, management improvement programs, process consulting, team building, conflict resolution, management counseling and coaching, and various planned change interventions.

Some of the resources and special skills which TRG commonly uses to manage and implement activities include:

- o interviewing and data collection skills -- quickly and accurately assessing an organization, and learning how it operates and what its problems are. This involves skills ranging from questionnaire design to one-on-one interviewing skills

- o consultation skills -- building a trustful relationship with a client which supports collaborative decision making

- o facilitation skills -- conducting teambuilding retreats, team planning meetings, and group problem solving meetings

- o coaching skills -- observing individual interactions, providing management coaching and feedback, suggesting alternative approaches

- o conflict resolution skills -- using problem-solving skills to help individuals and groups manage organizational conflict more effectively

- o training skills -- conducting training needs assessments and training programs that cause long-lasting behavior changes. TRG staff are particularly skillful at creating courses that are practical and results-oriented, build skills and are participatory in nature.

In recent years, TRG has had subcontracts to provide these kinds of human resources development services to four AID funded projects -- Water and Sanitation for Health (WASH), the Irrigation support Project for Asia and the Near East (ISPAN), the Program for International Training for Health (INTRAH), and the Egypt Local Development II Cooperative Program.

In the area of institution development, TRG has participated in integrated project design for developing water-sector institutions for USAID in Thailand and Sri Lanka, and has written an institutional assessment for the water sector in four Near Eastern countries (Yemen, Jordan, Egypt, and Tunisia). TRG has also developed guidelines for assessing institutional effectiveness in the water supply and sanitation sector.

As a part of followup to the AID Senior Management Course and the Management Skills Course, TRG has provided these kinds of services in AID/W offices and in missions overseas. TRG has worked with more than fifteen missions and over twenty AID/W offices who are working to improve management through such activities as mission/office specific training workshops and retreats. Missions where TRG has carried out management improvement efforts include Bolivia, El Salvador, Ecuador, Somalia, Swaziland, Yemen, Thailand, and Egypt. AID/W offices include PPC, S&T/H, S&T/RD, AFR/SWA, AFR/EA, ANE/TR, and LAC/DR.

TRG is also working with Camp Dresser & McKee (CDM), a large international environmental engineering firm which has the principal hazardous waste remediation investigation contract with EPA. TRG's work has consisted of helping CDM mobilize the organization for this $170 million project. TRG is helping build the internal capacity to deliver training and technology transfer programs in hazardous waste technologies, and is helping the organization focus its energies on developing a new market in the area of hazardous waste.

TRG has worked with a variety of private voluntary organizations (PVO's) in the area of increasing organizational effectiveness. Among these organizations are Youth for Understanding, National Council for International Health, World Education, Sietar, American Association of University Women, and National Mental Health Association.

TRG has worked with the World Bank to offer a series of workshops to Bank staff to increase their understanding and build skills needed to support and encourage borrowers to build institutional development strategies into their various projects.

TRG worked for eight years as an OD consultant with the Organization of American States to help them develop an organization-wide effort to increase productivity of staff members. Activities include a

management and supervisory improvement program, a program to implement extensive computerized management information systems, and a series of departmental problem-solving and action-planning retreats.

Technology Transfer

Much of TRG's work has involved helping organizations become more effective at technology transfer. TRG has developed innovative training approaches which can be used by technicians and other non-trainers as they attempt to get specialized skills and approaches into the hands of the people who need it. TRG has worked on technology transfer programs for the U.S. Agency for International Development, World Bank, People's Republic of China, U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Peace Corps, and the Camp Dresser & McKee REM (Hazardous Waste) project.

Training Resources Group has an on-going relationship with the Department of Personnel and Training at the Ministry of Agriculture in Indonesia. Through the USAID funded Professional Resource Development II (PRD) Project TRG has conducted six highly successful training programs in technology transfer for over one hundred staff members in the department since 1981.

During the three year period 1981-1984, TRG staff worked as consultants in support of the AID Water and Sanitation for Health Project (WASH I), working closely with the Bureau of Science and Technology on a number of aspects of this large project. A major thrust of this project is in the areas of institutional development, technology transfer, and training. As a result of its excellent track record, TRG became a subcontractor on the 5-year WASH II project and recently began work under the WASH III contract.

Training Materials & Curriculum Development

TRG staff has extensive experience in planning, writing, and publishing training materials. Using appropriate educational technology and working closely with the client, we have developed a wide variety of training materials.

Within the last few years, TRG has developed 16 training manuals and guidelines for a wide variety of development activities ranging from guidelines for team planning meetings, a training guide for community participation in development projects, a training guide for operations rural water supply systems to guidelines for programming PL 480 Title II food aid resources.

Working with technical specialists, TRG has developed modularized training manuals for emergency disaster relief in water and sanitation, rain-water harvesting and spring capping. Five training manuals have been developed for the U.S. Peace Corps which are integrated into a comprehensive core-curriculum approach to training Peace Corps volunteers. TRG has completed a contract with the U.S. Internal

Revenue Service to redesign the INTAX management training program for tax administrators from developing countries.

For the U.S. Department of Agriculture TRG developed and wrote a 5-day program of training modules for supervisors and managers in agricultural organizations, a 3-day program for introducing new instructors to experiential learning methodologies, and an Instructors Guide and Participant Manual for the International Training Division's course on Training of Trainers.

TRG has created and produced MARKHALL, a comparative management simulation designed to help managers explore various management styles and the concept of "organizational culture."

Training of Trainers (TOT)

A substantial portion of TRG's activities is aimed at efforts to build and improve the design and delivery skills of trainers. TRG uses trainer development strategies that stress practical approaches such as practice training sessions with video taping equipment where trainers can critique themselves and each other by playing back the video tape session.

For several years, TRG has designed and delivered a six-week TOT for trainers from developing countries all over the world under the sponsorship of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Also for USDA, TRG conducted a TOT for over 60 university instructors employed by the USDA International Training Division.

TRG has provided TOT workshops for the Program for International Training in Health (INTRAH) in Africa (Mali, Rwanda and Burkina Faso), for the National Council for International Health in the U.S., for the Regional Housing and Urban Development Office in Cote d'Ivoire, for U.S. Peace Corps, and the Government of Indonesia (through the University of Wisconsin).

Several times a year TRG offers an advanced public TOT workshop for experienced trainers called Facilitator Training. This five-day program is designed for trainers/facilitators who wish to review and enhance their stand-up and training design skills. Participants in these workshops are from both the public and private sectors.

In addition to providing the traditional human resource development services described above, TRG has developed and implemented innovative programs in the following areas:

Cross-Cultural Training

TRG has developed an approach to cross-cultural training which stresses the enhancement and development of skills needed to live, cope, and learn about other cultures. TRG staff have developed a cross-cultural training manual which has been tested and adopted for use in training Peace Corps volunteers in over 50 countries worldwide. In addition,

TRG has conducted cross-cultural skills workshops for a variety of organizations.

TRG is conducting a series of workshops on managing across cultures for the Digital Equipment Corporation. These workshops are designed to introduce participants to what it is like to work in a multicultural and multinational environment.

Training Systems Design and Development

TRG has provided training systems design (which includes organizational design, staffing design, curriculum design, administrative design) and training systems development (which includes training of trainers and consultation) to the Provincial Waterworks Authority of Thailand, the Patriotic Health Campaign Committee of the People's Republic of China (rural water supply), the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, the Department of Agriculture in Indonesia, and the national Water Supply and Drainage Board of Sri Lanka.

TRG has assisted the Federal Emergency Management Agency in developing short and long term training plans for senior government officials, specifically in designing team building programs for preparing diverse groups of managers and experts to function as new working units, developing and carrying our assessment procedures for extended training exercises, and in conference planning.

Assessment Center Innovations

Over the past five years, TRG staff has adapted and applied the principles of management assessment centers to the selection of various kinds of personnel. These selection programs have been developed to help clients like University Research Corporation, Wang, World Education, and the Peace Corps select trainers, engineers and other consultants for work in the U.S. and abroad.

AID MANAGEMENT SKILLS COURSE

Part Three: Performance Feedback

Six weeks had gone by since Pat and Fred had had their planning meeting about the participant training program. Much had happened in that time. Pat began to think about getting together with Fred to review the project and provide some feedback on his performance. Thinking about how to approach this meeting with Fred, Pat pulled out the file and workplan that Fred had prepared. As he thought back over the past weeks, and quickly reviewed the workplan, he realized that he had completely overlooked the deadline for reaching agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture on the host country contribution. That was a major milestone he and Fred had agreed to, and he really didn't know what had happened. He had been out of the country at a conference on institutional development approaches to irrigation projects, and he had forgotten to ask about it when he got back. In fact, he had forgotten all about that until he looked at the file on his desk. Oh, well.

Turning from that issue to Fred's overall performance, Pat began to think about how Fred had done over the past few months. Here are some of his thoughts:

- Pat had gotten really upset when, shortly after his work planning conversation with Fred six weeks ago, he had heard from one of his friends in the Mission Executive Office that Fred was being abrasive over there, demanding a four bedroom house even though Fred had only one child. He was making enemies and it had to stop. Pat hadn't had time to check that out when he heard it, but now.....?

- Pat thought Fred really wasn't taking his budgeting tasks seriously, and budgeting was very important in participant training programs. Fred didn't seem to like to do it. He was not being precise in budgeting, avoided working with the USAID Controller, was not serious about pursuing the host country contribution, and was not using standard costing factors in preparing budgets. Fred had apparently been heard to say he didn't intend to put much energy into it, and it looked like he had not! Tasks in this area were not satisfactory.

- They had agreed in their work plan that Fred would write monthly progress reports. Pat had noticed that Fred's writing in the first report had improved -- he seemed to be less sloppy, did not leave things out, and his logic seemed more coherent.

- Fred's work with his ministry counterparts continued to be outstanding - he knew lots of people, they seemed to respect him, he was taking language lessons and was making good progress, and his sense of what his counterparts would accept and be interested in was generally on target. He also had good nitty gritty information on what was happening in rural areas. He traveled a lot, and had set up a good network with appropriate contacts in two of the provinces in which there were potential trainees for the participant training program.

- As he was thinking about Fred, he also began to think about Negash -- he really should do something there. Negash just wasn't doing very well. He didn't seem to be very interested in what was going on, was kind of quiet and didn't take initiative. In fact, Pat thought it was easier to do things himself than it was to give them to Negash, so he didn't give him many important things to do. Although he had talked to Negash a little about some specific projects he wanted him to do, Negash had not really accomplished them. Then Pat had got really busy, and had not had time to say anything; besides, he had heard that some Lenapans did not really respond to direct feedback, so he decided not to say anything. Well, he guessed he would just see what happened here.

- Returning to think about Fred, he speculated about something that had been bothering him.....although Fred had some excellent things going for him, he really did not fit well in the Mission. Heavens knows that Pat really didn't like a lot of the stuff that he had to do, but Fred was much worse. He was cynical about the paperwork, and said things like "we should do away with any illusion that we are a development agency if we only get rewarded for obligating funds."

- As a result, he wanted to do his own thing -- he especially avoided doing things for the Program Office folks, whom he regarded as paper pushers. This was exasperating at times since Pat had his own work to do, and felt he had to spend too much of his time trying to convince Fred to do what Fred perceived as bureaucratic tasks around the Mission. For example, Fred regularly missed deadlines on assignments and tried to avoid going to meetings.

  He especially did not like program review committee meetings, and would often simply not show up. Bob Gorman, in Vocation Education, in fact had just told Pat that Fred had not shown up for the last two meetings of the Vocational Education Project Committee, which had a significant agricultural section and some potential for collaboration on Fred's participant training effort. Bob said that he

assumed that meant that "you all think everything is OK." Pat did not know what to say about this, as this input into the Vocational Education Project was another of the milestones that Fred was supposed to be working on.

- There were also times when Fred seemed to get impatient with his counterparts in the Ministry of Agriculture in the capitol city, although his general relationships were quite good. Pat thought that Fred was pushing too hard to get provincial extension agents included in the participant training program. Although Pat agreed with the general direction, he also realized there were times to compromise even when you disagreed in order to maintain good relationships with the ministry.

- Despite the addition of the participant training responsibilities, Fred had begun to develop the outlines of a very good approach to small farmer irrigation using an appropriate tech approach which Pat thought might turn into a very solid project for next year.

use for pos. feedback

- One last thing -- it seemed to Pat that Fred was drinking a lot lately. In fact, he had run into him at a cocktail party and thought that he was quite drunk.

Pat began to prepare for the feedback meeting with Fred. What to include, and how?

Set framework / climate

IV:27 7/86 adjust to post - language, counterpart relations positive, appropriate comments

Part. training

1 - budgeting

2 - deadline for host country contrib

3 - need to participate in broader mission reviews

complement initiative sm. farmer irrigation approp. tech.

16

The manager's job: folklore and fact

Henry Mintzberg

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6 Ideas for action — 75449
John Huberman; Charles W. Smith; Robert Hershey

26 Your employees' right to blow the whistle
Kenneth D. Walters — 75412

36 Management handbooks for continuing education
Dik Twedt — 75411

49 The manager's job: folklore and fact
Henry Mintzberg — 75409

62 How to meet the press
Chester Burger — 75402

71 Put a price tag on your customer servicing levels
Harvey N. Shycon and Christopher R. Sprague — 75410

79 Embezzler's guide to the computer
Brandt Allen — 75401

90 'Visible management' at United Airlines
An interview with Edward E. Carlson — 75403

98 Quality control in a service business
G.M. Hostage — 75405

107 New way to measure consumers' judgments
Paul E. Green and Yoram Wind — 75404

118 On executive suicide
Harry Levinson — 75407

123 What happens when our oil and gas run out?
Alan S. Manne — 75408

138 EEO compliance: behind the corporate mask
Frances Lear — 75406

The manager's job: folklore and fact

Henry Mintzberg

The classical view says that the manager organizes, coordinates, plans, and controls; the facts suggest otherwise

Just what does the manager do? For years the manager, the heart of the organization, has been assumed to be like an orchestra leader, controlling the various parts of his organization with the ease and precision of a Seiji Ozawa. However, when one looks at the few studies that have been done—covering managerial positions from the president of the United States to street gang leaders—the facts show that managers are not reflective, regulated workers, informed by their massive MIS systems, scientific, and professional. The evidence suggests that they play a complex, intertwined combination of interpersonal, informational, and decisional roles. The author's message is that if managers want to be more effective, they must recognize what their job really is and then use the resources at hand to support rather than hamper their own nature. Understanding their jobs as well as understanding themselves takes both introspection and objectivity on the managers' part. At the end of the article the author includes a set of self-study questions to help provide that insight.

Mr. Mintzberg is associate professor in the Faculty of Management at McGill University, Montreal, Canada. He is currently a visiting professor at Centre d'étude et de Recherche sur les organisations et la gestion (I.A.E.) in Aix-en-Provence, France. Some of the material in this article is condensed from the author's book *The Nature of Managerial Work*, published by Harper & Row.

If you ask a manager what he does, he will most likely tell you that he plans, organizes, coordinates, and controls. Then watch what he does. Don't be surprised if you can't relate what you see to these four words.

When he is called and told that one of his factories has just burned down, and he advises the caller to see whether temporary arrangements can be made to supply customers through a foreign subsidiary, is he planning, organizing, coordinating, or controlling? How about when he presents a gold watch to a retiring employee? Or when he attends a conference to meet people in the trade? Or on returning from that conference, when he tells one of his employees about an interesting product idea he picked up there?

The fact is that these four words, which have dominated management vocabulary since the French industrialist Henri Fayol first introduced them in 1916, tell us little about what managers actually do. At best, they indicate some vague objectives managers have when they work.

The field of management, so devoted to progress and change, has for more than half a century not seriously addressed *the* basic question: What do managers do? Without a proper answer, how can we teach management? How can we design planning or information systems for managers? How can we improve the practice of management at all?

Editors' note: Footnotes are listed on page 61.

Our ignorance of the nature of managerial work shows up in various ways in the modern organization—in the boast by the successful manager that he never spent a single day in a management training program; in the turnover of corporate planners who never quite understood what it was the manager wanted; in the computer consoles gathering dust in the back room because the managers never used the fancy on-line MIS some analyst thought they needed. Perhaps most important, our ignorance shows up in the inability of our large public organizations to come to grips with some of their most serious policy problems.

Somehow, in the rush to automate production, to use management science in the functional areas of marketing and finance, and to apply the skills of the behavioral scientist to the problem of worker motivation, the manager—that person in charge of the organization or one of its subunits—has been forgotten.

My intention in this article is simple: to break the reader away from Fayol's words and introduce him to a more supportable, and what I believe to be a more useful, description of managerial work. This description derives from my review and synthesis of the available research on how various managers have spent their time.

In some studies, managers were observed intensively ("shadowed" is the term some of them used); in a number of others, they kept detailed diaries of their activities; in a few studies, their records were analyzed. All kinds of managers were studied—foremen, factory supervisors, staff managers, field sales managers, hospital administrators, presidents of companies and nations, and even street gang leaders. These "managers" worked in the United States, Canada, Sweden, and Great Britain. In the ruled insert on page 115 is a brief review of the major studies that I found most useful in developing this description, including my own study of five American chief executive officers.

A synthesis of these findings paints an interesting picture, one as different from Fayol's classical view as a cubist abstract is from a Renaissance painting. In a sense, this picture will be obvious to anyone who has ever spent a day in a manager's office, either in front of the desk or behind it. Yet, at the same time, this picture may turn out to be revolutionary, in that it throws into doubt so much of the folklore that we have accepted about the manager's work.

I first discuss some of this folklore and contrast it with some of the discoveries of systematic research—the hard facts about how managers spend their time. Then I synthesize these research findings in a description of ten roles that seem to describe the essential content of all managers' jobs. In a concluding section, I discuss a number of implications of this synthesis for those trying to achieve more effective management, both in classrooms and in the business world.

Some folklore and facts about managerial work

There are four myths about the manager's job that do not bear up under careful scrutiny of the facts.

1

Folklore: The manager is a reflective, systematic planner. The evidence on this issue is overwhelming, but not a shred of it supports this statement.

Fact: Study after study has shown that managers work at an unrelenting pace, that their activities are characterized by brevity, variety, and discontinuity, and that they are strongly oriented to action and dislike reflective activities. Consider this evidence:

□

Half the activities engaged in by the five chief executives of my study lasted less than nine minutes, and only 10% exceeded one hour.[1] A study of 56 U.S. foremen found that they averaged 583 activities per eight-hour shift, an average of 1 every 48 seconds.[2] The work pace for both chief executives and foremen was unrelenting. The chief executives met a steady stream of callers and mail from the moment they arrived in the morning until they left in the evening. Coffee breaks and lunches were inevitably work related, and ever-present subordinates seemed to usurp any free moment.

□

A diary study of 160 British middle and top managers found that they worked for a half hour or more without interruption only about once every two days.[3]

□

Of the verbal contacts of the chief executives in m study, 93% were arranged on an ad hoc basis. On[illegible] 1% of the executives' time was spent in open-end[illegible]

observational tours. Only 1 out of 368 verbal contacts was unrelated to a specific issue and could be called general planning. Another researcher finds that "in *not one single case* did a manager report the obtaining of important external information from a general conversation or other undirected personal communication."[4]

□

No study has found important patterns in the way managers schedule their time. They seem to jump from issue to issue, continually responding to the needs of the moment.

Is this the planner that the classical view describes? Hardly. How, then, can we explain this behavior? The manager is simply responding to the pressures of his job. I found that my chief executives terminated many of their own activities, often leaving meetings before the end, and interrupted their desk work to call in subordinates. One president not only placed his desk so that he could look down a long hallway but also left his door open when he was alone—an invitation for subordinates to come in and interrupt him.

Clearly, these managers wanted to encourage the flow of current information. But more significantly, they seemed to be conditioned by their own work loads. They appreciated the opportunity cost of their own time, and they were continually aware of their ever-present obligations—mail to be answered, callers to attend to, and so on. It seems that no matter what he is doing, the manager is plagued by the possibilities of what he might do and what he must do.

When the manager must plan, he seems to do so implicitly in the context of daily actions, not in some abstract process reserved for two weeks in the organization's mountain retreat. The plans of the chief executives I studied seemed to exist only in their heads—as flexible, but often specific, intentions. The traditional literature notwithstanding, the job of managing does not breed reflective planners; the manager is a real-time responder to stimuli, an individual who is conditioned by his job to prefer live to delayed action.

2

Folklore: The effective manager has no regular duties to perform. Managers are constantly being told to spend more time planning and delegating, and less time seeing customers and engaging in negotiations. These are not, after all, the true tasks of the manager. To use the popular analogy, the good manager, like the good conductor, carefully orchestrates everything in advance, then sits back to enjoy the fruits of his labor, responding occasionally to an unforeseeable exception.

But here again the pleasant abstraction just does not seem to hold up. We had better take a closer look at those activities managers feel compelled to engage in before we arbitrarily define them away.

Fact: In addition to handling exceptions, managerial work involves performing a number of regular duties, including ritual and ceremony, negotiations, and processing of soft information that links the organization with its environment. Consider some evidence from the research studies:

□

A study of the work of the presidents of small companies found that they engaged in routine activities because their companies could not afford staff specialists and were so thin on operating personnel that a single absence often required the president to substitute.[5]

□

One study of field sales managers and another of chief executives suggest that it is a natural part of both jobs to see important customers, assuming the managers wish to keep those customers.[6]

□

Someone, only half in jest, once described the manager as that person who sees visitors so that everyone else can get his work done. In my study, I found that certain ceremonial duties—meeting visiting dignitaries, giving out gold watches, presiding at Christmas dinners—were an intrinsic part of the chief executive's job.

□

Studies of managers' information flow suggest that managers play a key role in securing "soft" external information (much of it available only to them because of their status) and in passing it along to their subordinates.

3

Folklore: The senior manager needs aggregated information, which a formal management information system best provides. Not too long ago, the words *total information system* were everywhere in the management literature. In keeping with the classical view of the manager as that individual perched on the apex of a regulated, hierarchical system, the

literature's manager was to receive all his important information from a giant, comprehensive MIS.

But lately, as it has become increasingly evident that these giant MIS systems are not working—that managers are simply not using them—the enthusiasm has waned. A look at how managers actually process information makes the reason quite clear. Managers have five media at their command—documents, telephone calls, scheduled and unscheduled meetings, and observational tours.

Fact: Managers strongly favor the verbal media—namely, telephone calls and meetings. The evidence comes from every single study of managerial work. Consider the following:

□
In two British studies, managers spent an average of 66% and 80% of their time in verbal (oral) communication.[7] In my study of five American chief executives, the figure was 78%.
□
These five chief executives treated mail processing as a burden to be dispensed with. One came in Saturday morning to process 142 pieces of mail in just over three hours, to "get rid of all the stuff." This same manager looked at the first piece of "hard" mail he had received all week, a standard cost report, and put it aside with the comment, "I never look at this."
□
These same five chief executives responded immediately to 2 of the 40 routine reports they received during the five weeks of my study and to four items in the 104 periodicals. They skimmed most of these periodicals in seconds, almost ritualistically. In all, these chief executives of good-sized organizations initiated on their own—that is, not in response to something else—a grand total of 25 pieces of mail during the 25 days I observed them.

An analysis of the mail the executives received reveals an interesting picture—only 13% was of specific and immediate use. So now we have another piece in the puzzle: not much of the mail provides live, current information—the action of a competitor, the mood of a government legislator, or the rating of last night's television show. Yet this is the information that drove the managers, interrupting their meetings and rescheduling their workdays.

Consider another interesting finding. Managers seem to cherish "soft" information, especially gossip, hearsay, and speculation. Why? The reason is its timeliness; today's gossip may be tomorrow's fact. The manager who is not accessible for the telephone call informing him that his biggest customer was seen golfing with his main competitor may read about a dramatic drop in sales in the next quarterly report. But then it's too late.

To assess the value of historical, aggregated, "hard" MIS information, consider two of the manager's prime uses for his information—to identify problems and opportunities[8] and to build his own mental models of the things around him (e.g., how his organization's budget system works, how his customers buy his product, how changes in the economy affect his organization, and so on). Every bit of evidence suggests that the manager identifies decision situations and builds models not with the aggregated abstractions an MIS provides, but with specific tidbits of data.

Consider the words of Richard Neustadt, who studied the information-collecting habits of Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower:

"It is not information of a general sort that helps a President see personal stakes; not summaries, not surveys, not the *bland amalgams*. Rather . . . it is the odds and ends of *tangible detail* that pieced together in his mind illuminate the underside of issues put before him. To help himself he must reach out as widely as he can for every scrap of fact, opinion, gossip, bearing on his interests and relationships as President. He must become his own director of his own central intelligence."[9]

The manager's emphasis on the verbal media raises two important points:

First, verbal information is stored in the brains of people. Only when people write this information down can it be stored in the files of the organization—whether in metal cabinets or on magnetic tape—and managers apparently do not write down much of what they hear. Thus the strategic data bank of the organization is not in the memory of its computers but in the minds of its managers.

Second, the manager's extensive use of verbal media helps to explain why he is reluctant to delegate tasks. When we note that most of the manager's important information comes in verbal form and is stored in his head, we can well appreciate his reluctance. It is not as if he can hand a dossier over to

Research on managerial work

Considering its central importance to every aspect of management, there has been surprisingly little research on the manager's work, and virtually no systematic building of knowledge from one group of studies to another. In seeking to describe managerial work, I conducted my own research and also scanned the literature widely to integrate the findings of studies from many diverse sources with my own. These studies focused on two very different aspects of managerial work. Some were concerned with the characteristics of the work—how long managers work, where, at what pace and with what interruptions, with whom they work, and through what media they communicate. Other studies were more concerned with the essential content of the work—what activities the managers actually carry out, and why. Thus, after a meeting, one researcher might note that the manager spent 45 minutes with three government officials in their Washington office, while another might record that he presented his company's stand on some proposed legislation in order to change a regulation.

A few of the studies of managerial work are widely known, but most have remained buried as single journal articles or isolated books. Among the more important ones I cite (with full references in the footnotes) are the following:

- Sune Carlson developed the diary method to study the work characteristics of nine Swedish managing directors. Each kept a detailed log of his activities. Carlson's results are reported in his book *Executive Behavior*. A number of British researchers, notably Rosemary Stewart, have subsequently used Carlson's method. In *Managers and Their Jobs*, she describes the study of 160 top and middle managers of British companies during four weeks, with particular attention to the differences in their work.
- Leonard Sayles's book *Managerial Behavior* is another important reference. Using a method he refers to as "anthropological," Sayles studied the work content of middle- and lower-level managers in a large U.S. corporation. Sayles moved freely in the company, collecting whatever information struck him as important.
- Perhaps the best-known source is *Presidential Power*, in which Richard Neustadt analyzes the power and managerial behavior of Presidents Roosevelt, Truman, and Eisenhower. Neustadt used secondary sources—documents and interviews with other parties—to generate his data.
- Robert H. Guest, in *Personnel*, reports on a study of the foreman's working day. Fifty-six U.S. foremen were observed and each of their activities recorded during one eight-hour shift.
- Richard C. Hodgson, Daniel J. Levinson, and Abraham Zaleznik studied a team of three top executives of a U.S. hospital. From that study they wrote *The Executive Role Constellation*. These researchers addressed in particular the way in which work and socioemotional roles were divided among the three managers.
- William F. Whyte, from his study of a street gang during the Depression, wrote *Street Corner Society*. His findings about the gang's leadership, which George C. Homans analyzed in *The Human Group*, suggest some interesting similarities of job content between street gang leaders and corporate managers.

My own study involved five American CEOs of middle- to large-sized organizations—a consulting firm, a technology company, a hospital, a consumer goods company, and a school system. Using a method called "structural observation," during one intensive week of observation for each executive I recorded various aspects of every piece of mail and every verbal contact. My method was designed to capture data on both work characteristics and job content. In all, I analyzed 890 pieces of incoming and outgoing mail and 368 verbal contacts.

someone; he must take the time to "dump memory"—to tell that someone all he knows about the subject. But this could take so long that the manager may find it easier to do the task himself. Thus the manager is damned by his own information system to a "dilemma of delegation"—to do too much himself or to delegate to his subordinates with inadequate briefing.

4

Folklore: Management is, or at least is quickly becoming, a science and a profession. By almost any definitions of *science* and *profession*, this statement is false. Brief observation of any manager will quickly lay to rest the notion that managers practice a science. A science involves the enaction of systematic, analytically determined procedures or programs. If we do not even know what procedures managers use, how can we prescribe them by scientific analysis? And how can we call management a profession if we cannot specify what managers are to learn? For after all, a profession involves "knowledge of some department of learning or science" (*Random House Dictionary*).[10]

Fact: The managers' programs—to schedule time, process information, make decisions, and so on—remain locked deep inside their brains. Thus, to describe these programs, we rely on words like *judgment* and *intuition*, seldom stopping to realize that they are merely labels for our ignorance.

I was struck during my study by the fact that the executives I was observing—all very competent by any standard—are fundamentally indistinguishable from their counterparts of a hundred years ago (or a thousand years ago, for that matter). The information they need differs, but they seek it in the same way—by word of mouth. Their decisions concern modern technology, but the procedures they use to make them are the same as the procedures of the nineteenth-century manager. Even the computer, so important for the specialized work of the organization, has apparently had no influence on the work procedures of general managers. In fact, the manager is in a kind of loop, with increasingly heavy work pressures but no aid forthcoming from management science.

Considering the facts about managerial work, we can see that the manager's job is enormously complicated and difficult. The manager is overburdened with obligations; yet he cannot easily delegate his tasks. As a result, he is driven to overwork and is forced to do many tasks superficially. Brevity, fragmentation, and verbal communication characterize his work. Yet these are the very characteristics of managerial work that have impeded scientific attempts to improve it. As a result, the management scientist has concentrated his efforts on the specialized functions of the organization, where he could more easily analyze the procedures and quantify the relevant information.[11]

But the pressures of the manager's job are becoming worse. Where before he needed only to respond to owners and directors, now he finds that subordinates with democratic norms continually reduce his freedom to issue unexplained orders, and a growing number of outside influences (consumer groups, government agencies, and so on) expect his attention. And the manager has had nowhere to turn for help. The first step in providing the manager with some help is to find out what his job really is.

Back to a basic description of managerial work

Now let us try to put some of the pieces of this puzzle together. Earlier, I defined the manager as that person in charge of an organization or one of its subunits. Besides chief executive officers, this definition would include vice presidents, bishops, foremen, hockey coaches, and prime ministers. Can all of these people have anything in common? Indeed they can. For an important starting point, all are vested with formal authority over an organizational unit. From formal authority comes status, which leads to various interpersonal relations, and from these comes access to information. Information, in turn, enables the manager to make decisions and strategies for his unit.

The manager's job can be described in terms of various "roles," or organized sets of behaviors identified with a position. My description, shown in *Exhibit I*, comprises ten roles. As we shall see, formal authority gives rise to the three interpersonal roles, which in turn give rise to the three informational roles; these two sets of roles enable the manager to play the four decisional roles.

Interpersonal roles

Three of the manager's roles arise directly from his formal authority and involve basic interpersonal relationships.

1

First is the *figurehead* role. By virtue of his position as head of an organizational unit, every manager must perform some duties of a ceremonial nature. The president greets the touring dignitaries, the foreman attends the wedding of a lathe operator, and the sales manager takes an important customer to lunch.

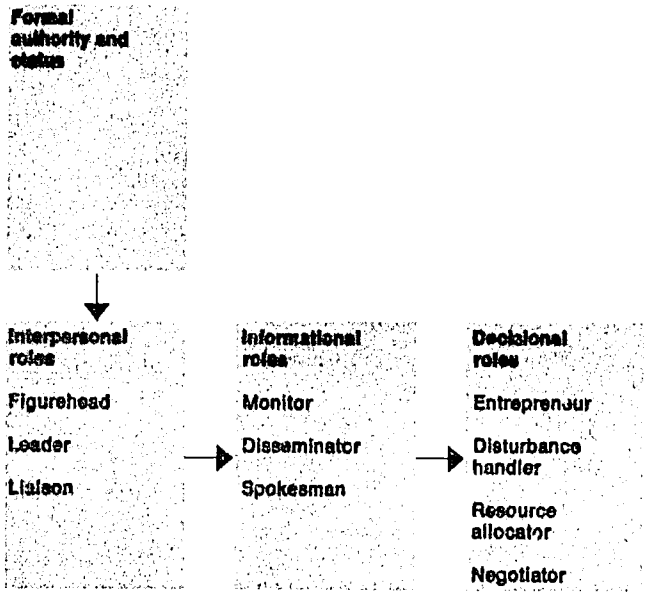
The chief executives of my study spent 12% of their contact time on ceremonial duties; 17% of their incoming mail dealt with acknowledgments and requests related to their status. For example, a letter to a company president requested free merchandise for a crippled schoolchild; diplomas were put on the desk of the school superintendent for his signature.

Duties that involve interpersonal roles may sometimes be routine, involving little serious communication and no important decision making. Nevertheless, they are important to the smooth functioning of an organization and cannot be ignored by the manager.

2

Because he is in charge of an organizational unit, the manager is responsible for the work of the people of that unit. His actions in this regard constitute the

Exhibit I
The manager's roles



leader role. Some of these actions involve leadership directly—for example, in most organizations the manager is normally responsible for hiring and training his own staff.

In addition, there is the indirect exercise of the leader role. Every manager must motivate and encourage his employees, somehow reconciling their individual needs with the goals of the organization. In virtually every contact the manager has with his employees, subordinates seeking leadership clues probe his actions: "Does he approve?" "How would he like the report to turn out?" "Is he more interested in market share than high profits?"

The influence of the manager is most clearly seen in the leader role. Formal authority vests him with great potential power; leadership determines in large part how much of it he will realize.

3
The literature of management has always recognized the leader role, particularly those aspects of it related to motivation. In comparison, until recently it has hardly mentioned the *liaison* role, in which the manager makes contacts outside his vertical chain of command. This is remarkable in light of the finding of virtually every study of managerial work that managers spend as much time with peers and other people outside their units as they do with their own subordinates—and, surprisingly, very little time with their own superiors.

In Rosemary Stewart's diary study, the 160 British middle and top managers spent 47% of their time with peers, 41% of their time with people outside their unit, and only 12% of their time with their superiors. For Robert H. Guest's study of U.S. foremen, the figures were 44%, 46%, and 10%. The chief executives of my study averaged 44% of their contact time with people outside their organizations, 48% with subordinates, and 7% with directors and trustees.

The contacts the five CEOs made were with an incredibly wide range of people: subordinates; clients, business associates, and suppliers; and peers—managers of similar organizations, government and trade organization officials, fellow directors on outside boards, and independents with no relevant organizational affiliations. The chief executives' time with and mail from these groups is shown in *Exhibit II* on page 119. Guest's study of foremen shows, likewise, that their contacts were numerous and wide ranging, seldom involving fewer than 25 individuals, and often more than 50.

As we shall see shortly, the manager cultivates such contacts largely to find information. In effect, the liaison role is devoted to building up the manager's own external information system—informal, private, verbal, but, nevertheless, effective.

Informational roles

By virtue of his interpersonal contacts, both with his subordinates and with his network of contacts, the manager emerges as the nerve center of his organizational unit. He may not know everything, but he typically knows more than any member of his staff.

Studies have shown this relationship to hold for all managers, from street gang leaders to U.S. presidents. In *The Human Group*, George C. Homans explains how, because they were at the center of the information flow in their own gangs and were also in close touch with other gang leaders, street gang leaders were better informed than any of their followers.[12] And Richard Neustadt describes the following account from his study of Franklin D. Roosevelt:

"The essence of Roosevelt's technique for information-gathering was competition. 'He would call you in,' one of his aides once told me, 'and he'd ask you to get the story on some complicated business, and you'd come back after a couple of days of hard labor and present the juicy morsel you'd uncovered under a stone somewhere, and *then* you'd find out he knew all about it, along with something else you *didn't* know. Where he got this information from he wouldn't mention, usually, but after he had done this to you once or twice you got damn careful about *your* information.' " [13]

We can see where Roosevelt "got this information" when we consider the relationship between the interpersonal and informational roles. As leader, the manager has formal and easy access to every member of his staff. Hence, as noted earlier, he tends to know more about his own unit than anyone else does. In addition, his liaison contacts expose the manager to external information to which his subordinates often lack access. Many of these contacts are with other managers of equal status, who are themselves nerve centers in their own organization. In this way, the manager develops a powerful data base of information.

The processing of information is a key part of the manager's job. In my study, the chief executives spent 40% of their contact time on activities devoted exclusively to the transmission of information; 70% of their incoming mail was purely informational (as opposed to requests for action). The manager does not leave meetings or hang up the telephone in order to get back to work. In large part, communication *is* his work. Three roles describe these informational aspects of managerial work.

1

As *monitor*, the manager perpetually scans his environment for information, interrogates his liaison contacts and his subordinates, and receives unsolicited information, much of it as a result of the network of personal contacts he has developed. Remember that a good part of the information the manager collects in his monitor role arrives in verbal form, often as gossip, hearsay, and speculation. By virtue of his contacts, the manager has a natural advantage in collecting this soft information for his organization.

2

He must share and distribute much of this information. Information he gleans from outside personal contacts may be needed within his organization. In his *disseminator* role, the manager passes some of his privileged information directly to his subordinates, who would otherwise have no access to it. When his subordinates lack easy contact with one another, the manager will sometimes pass information from one to another.

3

In his *spokesman* role, the manager sends some of his information to people outside his unit—a president makes a speech to lobby for an organization cause, or a foreman suggests a product modification to a supplier. In addition, as part of his role as spokesman, every manager must inform and satisfy the influential people who control his organizational unit. For the foreman, this may simply involve keeping the plant manager informed about the flow of work through the shop.

The president of a large corporation, however, may spend a great amount of his time dealing with a host of influences. Directors and shareholders must be advised about financial performance; consumer groups must be assured that the organization is fulfilling its social responsibilities; and government officials must be satisfied that the organization is abiding by the law.

Decisional roles

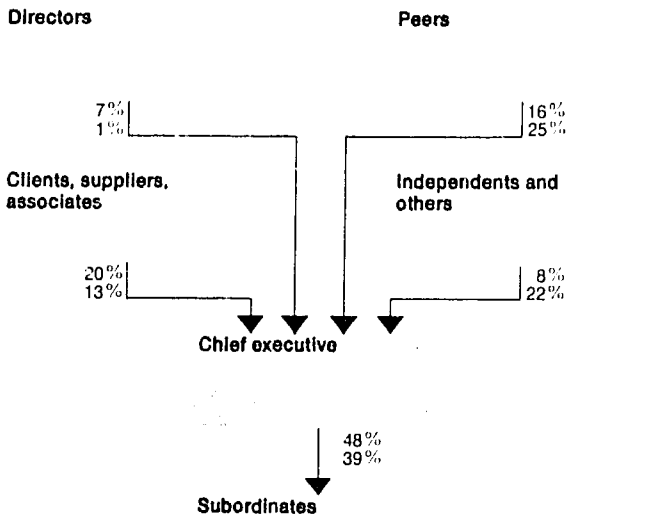
Information is not, of course, an end in itself; it is the basic input to decision making. One thing is clear in the study of managerial work: the manager plays the major role in his unit's decision-making system. As its formal authority, only he can commit the unit to important new courses of action; and as its nerve center, only he has full and current information to make the set of decisions that determines the unit's strategy. Four roles describe the manager as decision-maker.

1

As *entrepreneur*, the manager seeks to improve his unit, to adapt it to changing conditions in the environment. In his monitor role, the president is constantly on the lookout for new ideas. When a good one appears, he initiates a development project that he may supervise himself or delegate to an employee (perhaps with the stipulation that he must approve the final proposal).

There are two interesting features about these development projects at the chief executive level.

Exhibit II
The chief executives' contacts



Note: The top figure indicates the proportion of total contact time spent with each group and the bottom figure, the proportion of mail from each group.

First, these projects do not involve single decisions or even unified clusters of decisions. Rather, they emerge as a series of small decisions and actions sequenced over time. Apparently, the chief executive prolongs each project so that he can fit it bit by bit into his busy, disjointed schedule and so that he can gradually come to comprehend the issue, if it is a complex one.

Second, the chief executives I studied supervised as many as 50 of these projects at the same time. Some projects entailed new products or processes; others involved public relations campaigns, improvement of the cash position, reorganization of a weak department, resolution of a morale problem in a foreign division, integration of computer operations, various acquisitions at different stages of development, and so on.

The chief executive appears to maintain a kind of inventory of the development projects that he himself supervises—projects that are at various stages of development, some active and some in limbo. Like a juggler, he keeps a number of projects in the air; periodically, one comes down, is given a new burst of energy, and is sent back into orbit. At various intervals, he put new projects on-stream and discards old ones.

2

While the entrepreneur role describes the manager as the voluntary initiator of change, the *disturbance handler* role depicts the manager involuntarily responding to pressures. Here change is beyond the manager's control. He must act because the pressures of the situation are too severe to be ignored: strike looms, a major customer has gone bankrupt, or a supplier reneges on his contract.

It has been fashionable, I noted earlier, to compare the manager to an orchestra conductor, just as Peter F. Drucker wrote in *The Practice of Management:*

"The manager has the task of creating a true whole that is larger than the sum of its parts, a productive entity that turns out more than the sum of the resources put into it. One analogy is the conductor of a symphony orchestra, through whose effort, vision and leadership individual instrumental parts that are so much noise by themselves become the living whole of music. But the conductor has the composer's score; he is only interpreter. The manager is both composer and conductor." [14]

Now consider the words of Leonard R. Sayles, who has carried out systematic research on the manager's job:

"[The manager] is like a symphony orchestra conductor, endeavouring to maintain a melodious performance in which the contributions of the various instruments are coordinated and sequenced, patterned and paced, while the orchestra members are having various personal difficulties, stage hands are moving music stands, alternating excessive heat and cold are creating audience and instrument problems, and the sponsor of the concert is insisting on irrational changes in the program." [15]

In effect, every manager must spend a good part of his time responding to high-pressure disturbances. No organization can be so well run, so standardized, that it has considered every contingency in the uncertain environment in advance. Disturbances arise not only because poor managers ignore situations until they reach crisis proportions, but also because good managers cannot possibly anticipate all the consequences of the actions they take.

3

The third decisional role is that of *resource allocator.* To the manager falls the responsibility of deciding

Self-study questions for managers

1
Where do I get my information, and how? Can I make greater use of my contacts to get information? Can other people do some of my scanning for me? In what areas is my knowledge weakest, and how can I get others to provide me with the information I need? Do I have powerful enough mental models of those things I must understand within the organization and in its environment?
2
What information do I dissemir .e in my organization? How important is it that my subordinates get my information? Do I keep too much information to myself because dissemination of it is time-consuming or inconvenient? How can I get more information to others so they can make better decisions?
3
Do I balance information collecting with action taking? Do I tend to act before information is in? Or do I wait so long for all the information that opportunities pass me by and I become a bottleneck in my organization?
4
What pace of change am I asking my organization to tolerate? Is this change balanced so that our operations are neither excessively static nor overly disrupted? Have we sufficiently analyzed the impact of this change on the future of our organization?
5
Am I sufficiently well informed to pass judgment on the proposals that my subordinates make? Is it possible to leave final authorization for more o' the proposals with subordinates? Do we have problems of coordination because subordinates in fact now make too many of these decisions independently?
6
What is my vision of direction for this organization? Are these plans primarily in my own mind in loose form? Should I make them explicit in order to guide the decisions of others in the organization better? Or do I need flexibility to change them at will?
7
How do my subordinates react to my managerial style? Am I sufficiently sensitive to the powerful influence my actions have on them? Do I fully understand their reactions to my actions? Do I find an appropriate balance between encouragement and pressure? Do I stifle their initiative?
8
What kind of external relationships do I maintain, and how? Do I spend too much of my time maintaining these relationships? Are there certain types of people whom I should get to know better?
9
Is there any system to my time scheduling, or am I just reacting to the pressures of the moment? Do I find the appropriate mix of activities, or do I tend to concentrate on one particular function or one type of problem just because I find it interesting? Am I more efficient with particular kinds of work at special times of the day or week? Does my schedule reflect this? Can someone else (in addition to my secretary) take responsibility for much of my scheduling and do it more systematically?
10
Do I overwork? What effect does my work load have on my efficiency? Should I force myself to take breaks or to reduce the pace of my activity?
11
Am I too superficial in what I do? Can I really shift moods as quickly and frequently as my work patterns require? Should I attempt to decrease the amount of fragmentation and interruption in my work?
12
Do I orient myself too much toward current, tangible activities? Am I a slave to the action and excitement of my work, so that I am no longer able to concentrate on issues? Do key problems receive the attention they deserve? Should I spend more time reading and probing deeply into certain issues? Could I be more reflective? Should I be?
13
Do I use the different media appropriately? Do I know how to make the most of written communication? Do I rely excessively on face-to-face communication, thereby putting all but a few of my subordinates at an informational disadvantage? Do I schedule enough of my meetings on a regular basis? Do I spend enough time touring my organization to observe activity at first hand? Am I too detached from the heart of my organization's activities, seeing things only in an abstract way?
14
How do I blend my personal rights and duties? Do my obligations consume all my time? How can I free myself sufficiently from obligations to ensure that I am taking this organization where I want it to go? How can I turn my obligations to my advantage?

who will get what in his organizational unit. Perhaps the most important resource the manager allocates is his own time. Access to the manager constitutes exposure to the unit's nerve center and decision-maker. The manager is also charged with designing his unit's structure, that pattern of formal relationships that determines how work is to be divided and coordinated.

Also, in his role as resource allocator, the manager authorizes the important decisions of his unit before they are implemented. By retaining this power, the manager can ensure that decisions are interrelated; all must pass through a single brain. To fragment this power is to encourage discontinuous decision making and a disjointed strategy.

There are a number of interesting features about the manager's authorizing others' decisions. First, despite the widespread use of capital budgeting procedures—a means of authorizing various capital expenditures at one time—executives in my study made

a great many authorization decisions on an ad hoc basis. Apparently, many projects cannot wait or simply do not have the quantifiable costs and benefits that capital budgeting requires.

Second, I found that the chief executives faced incredibly complex choices. They had to consider the impact of each decision on other decisions and on the organization's strategy. They had to ensure that the decision would be acceptable to those who influence the organization, as well as ensure that resources would not be overextended. They had to understand the various costs and benefits as well as the feasibility of the proposal. They also had to consider questions of timing. All this was necessary for the simple approval of someone else's proposal. At the same time, however, delay could lose time, while quick approval could be ill considered and quick rejection might discourage the subordinate who had spent months developing a pet project.

One common solution to approving projects is to pick the man instead of the proposal. That is, the manager authorizes those projects presented to him by people whose judgment he trusts. But he cannot always use this simple dodge.

4
The final decisional role is that of *negotiator*. Studies of managerial work at all levels indicate that managers spend considerable time in negotiations: the president of the football team is called in to work out a contract with the holdout superstar; the corporation president leads his company's contingent to negotiate a new strike issue; the foreman argues a grievance problem to its conclusion with the shop steward. As Leonard Sayles puts it, negotiations are a "way of life" for the sophisticated manager.

These negotiations are duties of the manager's job; perhaps routine, they are not to be shirked. They are an integral part of his job, for only he has the authority to commit organizational resources in "real time," and only he has the nerve center information that important negotiations require.

The integrated job

It should be clear by now that the ten roles I have been describing are not easily separable. In the terminology of the psychologist, they form a gestalt, an integrated whole. No role can be pulled out of the framework and the job be left intact. For example, a manager without liaison contacts lacks external information. As a result, he can neither disseminate the information his employees need nor make decisions that adequately reflect external conditions. (In fact, this is a problem for the new person in a managerial position, since he cannot make effective decisions until he has built up his network of contacts.)

Here lies a clue to the problems of team management.[16] Two or three people cannot share a single managerial position unless they can act as one entity. This means that they cannot divide up the ten roles unless they can very carefully reintegrate them. The real difficulty lies with the informational roles. Unless there can be full sharing of managerial information—and, as I pointed out earlier, it is primarily verbal—team management breaks down. A single managerial job cannot be arbitrarily split, for example, into internal and external roles, for information from both sources must be brought to bear on the same decisions.

To say that the ten roles form a gestalt is not to say that all managers give equal attention to each role. In fact, I found in my review of the various research studies that

. . . sales managers seem to spend relatively more of their time in the interpersonal roles, presumably a reflection of the extrovert nature of the marketing activity;

. . . production managers give relatively more attention to the decisional roles, presumably a reflection of their concern with efficient work flow;

. . . staff managers spend the most time in the informational roles, since they are experts who manage departments that advise other parts of the organization.

Nevertheless, in all cases the interpersonal, informational, and decisional roles remain inseparable.

Toward more effective management

What are the messages for management in this description? I believe, first and foremost, that this description of managerial work should prove more

important to managers than any prescription they might derive from it. That is to say, *the manager's effectiveness is significantly influenced by his insight into his own work.* His performance depends on how well he understands and responds to the pressures and dilemmas of the job. Thus managers who can be introspective about their work are likely to be effective at their jobs. The ruled insert on page 58 offers 14 groups of self-study questions for managers. Some may sound rhetorical; none is meant to be. Even though the questions cannot be answered simply, the manager should address them.

Let us take a look at three specific areas of concern. For the most part, the managerial logjams—the dilemma of delegation, the data base centralized in one brain, the problems of working with the management scientist—revolve around the verbal nature of the manager's information. There are great dangers in centralizing the organization's data bank in the minds of its managers. When they leave, they take their memory with them. And when subordinates are out of convenient verbal reach of the manager, they are at an informational disadvantage.

1

The manager is challenged to find systematic ways to share his privileged information. A regular debriefing session with key subordinates, a weekly memory dump on the dictating machine, the maintaining of a diary of important information for limited circulation, or other similar methods may ease the logjam of work considerably. Time spent disseminating this information will be more then regained when decisions must be made. Of course, some will raise the question of confidentiality. But managers would do well to weigh the risks of exposing privileged information against having subordinates who can make effective decisions.

If there is a single theme that runs through this article, it is that the pressures of his job drive the manager to be superficial in his actions—to overload himself with work, encourage interruption, respond quickly to every stimulus, seek the tangible and avoid the abstract, make decisions in small increments, and do everything abruptly.

2

Here again, the manager is challenged to deal consciously with the pressures of superficiality by giving serious attention to the issues that require it, by stepping back from his tangible bits of information in order to see a broad picture, and by making use of analytical inputs. Although effective managers have to be adept at responding quickly to numerous and varying problems, the danger in managerial work is that they will respond to every issue equally (and that means abruptly) and that they will never work the tangible bits and pieces of informational input into a comprehensive picture of their world.

As I noted earlier, the manager uses these bits of information to build models of his world. But the manager can also avail himself of the models of the specialists. Economists describe the functioning of markets, operations researchers simulate financial flow processes, and behavioral scientists explain the needs and goals of people. The best of these models can be searched out and learned.

In dealing with complex issues, the senior manager has much to gain from a close relationship with the management scientists of his own organization. They have something important that he lacks—time to probe complex issues. An effective working relationship hinges on the resolution of what a colleague and I have called "the planning dilemma." [17] Managers have the information and the authority; analysts have the time and the technology. A successful working relationship between the two will be effected when the manager learns to share his information and the analyst learns to adapt to the manager's needs. For the analyst, adaptation means worrying less about the elegance of the method and more about its speed and flexibility.

It seems to me that analysts can help the top manager especially to schedule his time, feed in analytical information, monitor projects under his supervision, develop models to aid in making choices, design contingency plans for disturbances that can be anticipated, and conduct "quick-and-dirty" analysis for those that cannot. But there can be no cooperation if the analysts are out of the mainstream of the manager's information flow.

3

The manager is challenged to gain control of his own time by turning obligations to his advantage and by turning those things he wishes to do into obligations. The chief executives of my study initiated only 32% of their own contacts (and another 5% by mutual agreement). And yet to a considerable extent they seemed to control their time. There were two key factors that enabled them to do so.

First, the manager has to spend so much time discharging obligations that if he were to view them as just that, he would leave no mark on his organiza-

tion. The unsuccessful manager blames failure on the obligations; the effective manager turns his obligations to his own advantage. A speech is a chance to lobby for a cause; a meeting is a chance to reorganize a weak department; a visit to an important customer is a chance to extract trade information.

Second, the manager frees some of his time to do those things that he—perhaps no one else—thinks important by turning them into obligations. Free time is made, not found, in the manager's job; it is forced into the schedule. Hoping to leave some time open for contemplation or general planning is tantamount to hoping that the pressures of the job will go away. The manager who wants to innovate initiates a project and obligates others to report back to him; the manager who needs certain environmental information establishes channels that will automatically keep him informed; the manager who has to tour facilities commits himself publicly.

The educator's job

Finally, a word about the training of managers. Our management schools have done an admirable job of training the organization's specialists—management scientists, marketing researchers, accountants, and organizational development specialists. But for the most part they have not trained managers.[18]

Management schools will begin the serious training of managers when skill training takes a serious place next to cognitive learning. Cognitive learning is detached and informational, like reading a book or listening to a lecture. No doubt much important cognitive material must be assimilated by the manager-to-be. But cognitive learning no more makes a manager than it does a swimmer. The latter will drown the first time he jumps into the water if his coach never takes him out of the lecture hall, gets him wet, and gives him feedback on his performance.

In other words, we are taught a skill through practice plus feedback, whether in a real or a simulated situation. Our management schools need to identify the skills managers use, select students who show potential in these skills, put the students into situations where these skills can be practiced, and then give them systematic feedback on their performance.

My description of managerial work suggests a number of important managerial skills—developing peer relationships, carrying out negotiations, motivating subordinates, resolving conflicts, establishing information networks and subsequently disseminating information, making decisions in conditions of extreme ambiguity, and allocating resources. Above all, the manager needs to be introspective about his work so that he may continue to learn on the job.

Many of the manager's skills can, in fact, be practiced, using techniques that range from role playing to videotaping real meetings. And our management schools can enhance the entrepreneurial skills by designing programs that encourage sensible risk taking and innovation.

No job is more vital to our society than that of the manager. It is the manager who determines whether our social institutions serve us well or whether they squander our talents and resources. It is time to strip away the folklore about managerial work, and time to study it realistically so that we can begin the difficult task of making significant improvements in its performance.

1. All the data from my study can be found in Henry Mintzberg, *The Nature of Managerial Work* (New York: Harper & Row, 1973).

2. Robert H. Guest, "Of Time and the Foreman," *Personnel*, May 1956, p. 478.

3. Rosemary Stewart, *Managers and Their Jobs* (London: Macmillan, 1967), see also Sune Carlson, *Executive Behaviour* (Stockholm: Strombergs, 1951), the first of the diary studies.

4. Francis J. Aguilar, *Scanning the Business Environment* (New York: Macmillan, 1967), p. 102.

5. Unpublished study by Irving Choran, reported in Mintzberg, *The Nature of Managerial Work*.

6. Robert T. Davis, *Performance and Development of Field Sales Managers* (Boston: Division of Research, Harvard Business School, 1957); George H. Copeman, *The Role of the Managing Director* (London: Business Publications, 1963).

7. Stewart, *Managers and Their Jobs*; Tom Burns, "The Directions of Activity and Communication in a Departmental Executive Group," *Human Relations* 7, no. 1 (1954): 73.

8. H. Edward Wrapp, "Good Managers Don't Make Policy Decisions," HBR September-October 1967, p. 91. Wrapp refers to this as spotting opportunities and relationships in the stream of operating problems and decisions; in his article Wrapp raises a number of excellent points related to this analysis.

9. Richard E. Neustadt, *Presidential Power* (New York: John Wiley, 1960), pp. 153-154; italics added.

10. For a more thorough, though rather different, discussion of this issue, see Kenneth R. Andrews, "Toward Professionalism in Business Management," HBR March-April 1969, p. 49.

11. C. Jackson Grayson, Jr., in "Management Science and Business Practice," HBR July-August 1973, p. 41, explains in similar terms why, as chairman of the Price Commission, he did not use those very techniques that he himself promoted in his earlier career as a management scientist.

12. George C. Homans, *The Human Group* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1950), based on the study by William F. Whyte entitled *Street Corner Society*, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955).

13. Neustadt, *Presidential Power*, p. 157.

14. Peter F. Drucker, *The Practice of Management* (New York: Harper & Row, 1954), pp. 341-342.

15. Leonard R. Sayles, *Managerial Behavior* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964), p. 162.

16. See Richard C. Hodgson, Daniel J. Levinson, and Abraham Zaleznik, *The Executive Role Constellation* (Boston: Division of Research, Harvard Business School, 1965), for a discussion of the sharing of roles.

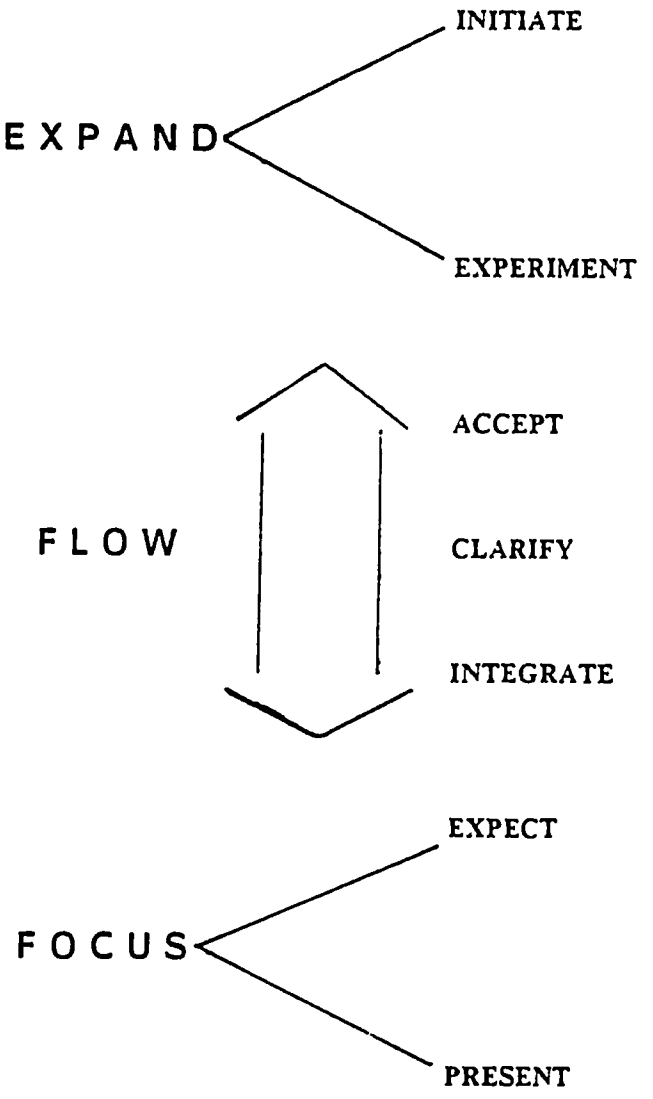
17. James S. Hekman and Henry Mintzberg, "The Planning Dilemma," *The Management Review*, May 1968, p. 4.

18. See J. Sterling Livingston, "Myth of the Well-Educated Manager," HBR January-February 1971, p. 79.

COMMUNICATION

1. "Involvement Skills" (required)

INVOLVEMENT SKILLS



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EXPAND

INITIATE

To **Initiate** is to generate the energy to start to make things happen. A person who **Initiates** is a person who says and thinks, *"I can make an impact."* Such a person has or acquires the skills to:

Take the Initiative	*"Let's find a way to do this job right."*
	"Let's stop talking about it and do it!"
Persist in efforts to move events off dead center.	*"O.K. we've had a setback, but we can continue to move forward."*
	"Let's move ahead, we'll find a way."
Make sure the right people are involved.	*"Invite Jane and John to the meeting. They have expertise; and will be affected by what happens, so their commitment is needed."*
Initiate a focus on excellence.	*"Our track record is excellent so why not go ahead?"*
Share information.	*"Here's the sensitive information you need to decide how to do your part of the job."*

Questions about the following activities were included in the **Involvement Skills Survey** to help you determine the extent to which you **Initiate**:

1. Taking initiative to resolve a problem or seize an opportunity.
8. Initiating high standards of excellence.
15. Sharing information with and involving the right people in what I'm doing, at the right time.
22. Translating ideas into action.
29. Getting things started rather than reacting to events.
36. Demonstrating that I am a competent person.
43. Taking initiative to get things moving.

EXPAND

EXPERIMENT

To **Experiment** is to generate and carry out ideas for doing things better, by doing something new, or by doing something familiar in a new way. To **Experiment** successfully is to learn how to improve by doing things differently.

Explore a situation from different angles.	*"Maybe there's another way we can do this -- let's brainstorm!"*
Identify previously unnoticed elements in a situation (e.g., facts, feelings, forces, relationships).	*"I hadn't seen the situation in that light before."* *"Here's what I have learned to do again and not do again if faced with that same situation."*
Generate ideas for doing something new.	*"I'm willing to try it to see if it will work."* *"What if we did have the resources to try it differently?"*
Set goals or suggest tasks so that something new can be tried.	*"Let's test your idea by adding one more step to the procedure."* *"Next time we have contract problems, let's assign an evaluation team to follow-up."*
Learn by trying new approaches.	*"Let's take a totally new approach to this situation."*

Questions about the following activities were included in the **Involvement Skills Survey** to help you determine the extent to which you **Experiment**:

2. Generating ideas intuitively as well as by reasoning.
9. Considering unproven methods as well as tried and true methods.
16. Learning from situations that don't go well and from those that do.
23. Developing fresh perspectives in situations.
30. Generating innovative thoughts.
37. Creating opportunities to do things differently.
44. Stimulating fresh thinking and broadening of viewpoints.

FLOW

ACCEPT

To **Accept** is to take things as they are. A person who **Accepts** is open to himself, to others, to their different views, to the nature of a situation. To **Accept** successfully is to **Accept** unconditionally, and therefore to be able to perceive accurately.

Show that you are open to the opinions and feelings of others, whether or not you approve or agree.	*"I respect and understand your position, even though I strongly disagree with you."*
Refrain from judging or evaluating.	*"The two of them did not perform as expected. Let's be sure we understand their position."*
Prevent yourself from reacting defensively to criticism or opposition.	*"I know you don't endorse my position. Could you please help me understand why?"*
Keep an open mind.	*"Tell us more about your idea --- about how you believe it will solve the problem."*
	"I rejected your proposal too quickly. I'd like to discuss it again."

Questions about the following activities were included in the **Involvement Skills Survey** to help you determine the extent to which you **Accept:**

3. Considering the attitudes and ideas of others objectively when they disagree with me.
10. Treating others with respect at all times.
17. Keeping an open mind.
24. Stopping my negative comments, and focusing on the positive.
31. Avoiding defensive reactions.
38. Listening rather than attacking or counter-attacking.
45. Saying things in ways which make the point without irritating others.

FLOW

CLARIFY

To **Clarify** is to bring forth accurate information about facts and feelings. To **Clarify** successfully is to build understanding. The skills to **Clarify** include the skills to:

Listen attentively to feelings as well as facts.	*"If my boss said that to me, I'd feel excited too."*
Ask questions to increase understanding (rather than present a position).	*"Let me ask you what you would do in the situation that you mentioned."*
Seek full understanding (rather than close a subject).	*"I am confused about the latest reorganization. Maybe you can help me figure out what's happening... "*
	"Would you give me some examples of what you are concerned will happen, so I can get a better picture of the situation as you see it?"
Summarize key points accurately.	*"So far, I gather there are three facts about the budget situation. First... "*
	"As I understand it, your needs are... "

Questions about the following activities were included in the **Involvement Skills Survey** to help you determine the extent to which you **Clarify**:

4. Questioning people in ways that surface key facts, opinions and feelings.
11. Understanding and summarizing the feelings, goals and expectations of others.
18. Accurately stating what others said.
25. Questioning others to help me understand their position.
32. Summarizing what others say in ways which capture their true intent.
39. Asking questions to discover a full picture of a situation.
46. Identifying and surfacing the needs and feelings that others and I have.

FLOW

INTEGRATE

To **Integrate** is to get people to work well together. To **Integrate** successfully is to align people, organizations and forces for a concerted effort to reach a common goal.

Identify common interests -- pull together different points of view and relate them to a whole.	*"Each of us will benefit in different ways from using the new planning system, and we all need it."* *"There are four areas we all agree on."*
Encourage fair treatment of others.	*"Let's make sure we all understand what commitment each of us is asking the others to take."*
Repair disrupted relationships.	*"It's important for us to work together, even though we've had troubles doing that in the past."* *"Let's sit down and resolve our differences ... I can't go on working with these negative feelings."*
Use humor to help others gain perspective on a situation.	*"I heard a joke which relates directly to this situation .*
Engage in successful dialogue which establishes openness and encourages people to build on one another's ideas or resources.	*"We all want to leave this meeting feeling we have used each other's resources fully."*
Identify, surface and resolve differences.	*"The main difference of opinion in the room seems to be between you two. Let's review where we are, and see if we can resolve the issue."* *"I think your criticisms of her work are important. Let's discuss this matter with her directly rather than having this conversation without her being present."*

FLOW

INTEGRATE

Questions about the following activities were included in the **Involvement Skills Survey** to help you determine the extent to which you **Integrate:**

5. Encouraging fair treatment of others.

12. Keeping different people committed to working together when they find it difficult to do so.

19. Repairing disrupted relationships e.g., by managing hurt feelings effectively.

26. Getting people to identify and work with their common interests.

33. Confronting and resolving differences between people rather than trying to suppress their differences.

40. Using humor to help people keep things in perspective, rather than using it to attack them or to avoid facing differences.

47. Building openness among people.

FOCUS

EXPECT

To **Expect** is to define goals and expectations. To **Expect** successfully is to contribute to the development of goals by stating them clearly at the outset and restating them as necessary to adapt to change. The skills to **Expect** include the skills to:

State goals and expectations clearly.	*"I say -- reduce costs within a range of 12 to 14 percent."*
	"I expect to have a written agenda for the meeting sent out ahead of time."
	"I want our proposal to be the most sound technical plan submitted."
Establish priorities, and modify them as necessary.	*"We have three top priorities. Let's rank them in order of importance."*
	"Of all the suggestions made this afternoon the most important one is Peter's."
Adapt to a situation without losing sight of the goal.	*"We can shift our position and still achieve our goal."*
	"The goal is not just to introduce the product. The goal is also to achieve a specific sales volume within a specific period of time after that."
Make requests for resources/help when it's needed.	*"The following is a description of the contributions needed for this project -- will you help with the first two tasks?"*

Questions about the following activities were included in the **Involvement Skills Survey**, to help you determine the extent to which you **Expect:**

6. Stating clear expectations in advance rather than having them surface from misunderstandings.

13. Focusing in on only those points that are important to an outcome.

20. Stating what is required to get the results.

27. Pinpointing what is of overriding significance to accomplish in a situation.

34. Setting goals to achieve results within a range, rather than to meet a rigid target.

41. Establishing priorities that reflect the relative importance of several items.

48. Specifying what is required to accomplish the objective.

FOCUS

PRESENT

To **Present** is to engage in and involve others in a thought process that results in sound agreements on courses of action. To **Present** successfully is to enable everyone who participates in making a decision to agree that it's the best among alternatives. The skills to **Present** include the skills to:

Call attention to the benefits of a position.	*"The long term benefits of in-house training will ultimately pay for what seems like an expensive undertaking now."*
State rationale based on experience.	*"Based on my experience with that vendor, it will actually take anywhere from 4-6 weeks to receive the shipment."*
Explore the pros and cons of your position and of the positions taken by others.	*"How would taking that action represent an improvement over what I've suggested?"* *"Yes, you can delay a decision. You probably can get better information. But let's consider what are the future costs of delay."*
Expressing likes and dislikes.	*"I'm impressed by your willingness to undertake this job, but disturbed about your lack of planning."*
Indicate positive or negative consequences.	*"The last time we took that approach we encounted three difficult obstacles."*
Present facts and logic which support your position.	*"You have a good point. I have an answer to the problem and also ways to resolve some other anticipated problems."* *"In response to your concern about new employee training, I've come up with three possible solutions."*
Increase interest of others by talking about future potential.	*"There are two or three approaches we can take to improve quality in the way we need."* *"Just think about it for a minute. With orders being processed in two days instead of five, we can dramatically improve customer service."*

4

FOCUS

PRESENT

Questions about the following activities were included in the **Involvement Skills Survey** to help you determine the extent to which you **Present:**

7. Demonstrating to others the benefits of a suggested course of action.

14. Presenting a point of view by asking a question.

21. Reasoning logically for and against your position and the positions of others.

28. Offering a rational position based on facts and experience.

35. Expressing what I like and dislike about an idea.

42. Emphasizing what are the positive or negative consequences for specific actions and outcomes.

49. Increasing interest in an idea by talking about future potential.

RESPONSE

The preceding seven skill areas cover 49 items in the **Involvement Skills Survey**. These **Involvement Skills** are needed to gain agreement and commitment of others. A question is, to what extent are you gaining agreement and commitment? The **Involvement Skills Survey** includes 4 items designed to help you answer this question. Each of the items is described below.

50. Gaining the best efforts from others.

People show commitment when they put forth their *best efforts*. They put forth their *best efforts* when they perform to their full potential as individuals and groups on their particular tasks; and, when they work together *in ways to be more productive*.

Others are not putting forth their best efforts when they approach their tasks half-heartedly, perform only to acceptable standards, and get in each other's way.

51. Generating belief in the organization's goals and values.

People show that they believe in the *organization's goals* and share its values when they align their objectives with those of the organization and uphold its values in their daily activities. They take action that is consistent with the *organization's values*. People align their goals with those of the organization, rather than set new goals of their own. People also show commitment to an organization by challenging goals and values that are not consistent.

People show lack of belief in the organization's goals and values by: a) trying to get them changed; b) setting goals that have nothing to do with the organization's goals; c) taking actions which violate its values; or, d) gossiping and undermining the organization's goals and values.

52. Getting people to support others.

People who are a part of a project or organization work *together* to accomplish something. They remain a part of the group because they see a purpose for doing so, not because they have nothing better to do. They remain despite conflict, or because they see conflict as constructive. They know people *working together and supporting each other can accomplish more* than working in isolation.

53. Gaining agreement of others on key issues.

People arrive at agreement after *exploring* issues thoroughly, not merely for the sake of avoiding disagreement or conflict. When they are unable to agree, they continue to seek ways of reaching agreement. People express their differing positions fully, clearly, and with intent to come up with the *best solution*, rather than merely accept the positions of others or take rigid positions of their own.

CONCEPTUALIZING

1. "Creating a Vision of Greatness: The First Step Toward Empowerment," from *The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work* by Peter Block. Jossey-Bass, 1986 (required)

2. "Transforming Leadership" from Chapter 3, "Man Waiting for Motivation" in *In Search of Excellence,* by Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., Harper and Row, 1982. pgs. 81-86 (optional)

4

Creating a Vision of Greatness: The First Step Toward Empowerment

Where We Are Headed

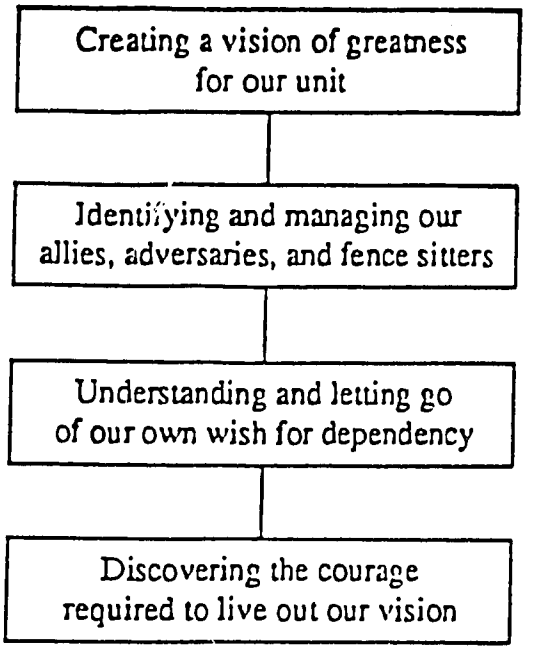
It might be helpful at this point to give a chart of where we are headed (Figure 8). This part of the book outlines elements of our own political effectiveness.

Empowering ourselves comes from acting on our enlightened self-interest. Politics is the pursuit of self-interest, and positive politics is the pursuit of enlightened self-interest. Step one is to take our enlightened self-interest seriously and give it top priority. Our empowerment is expressed through our personal commitment to each of the elements of enlightened self-interest discussed in Chapter Three.

Meaning, Contribution, and Service. We need to define what our unit has to offer the organization that will truly make a difference. Meaning comes from the act of creation, and the primary thing we create at work is a successful and useful organization. We decide to build an organization that expresses all of our values about work, achievement, and community. Mean-

"Creating a Vision of Greatness: The First Step Toward Empowerment," from The Empowered Manager: Positive Political Skills at Work by Peter Block, Jossey-Bass, 1986.

Figure 8. Empowering Ourselves.



ing comes through serving our customers and the people within our unit. Therefore, the first step in implementing an entrepreneurial organization is to create a vision of greatness for our group. The vision expresses our values and what we hope to contribute.

Positive Impact on Others. We want to build a unit that not only performs tasks well but one that also treats people well. Part of the vision statement deals with how we want people to be treated. We also need to focus on our relationships with those who oppose us. How we deal with our adversaries, and whether we can do so in a way that aligns with our vision, is the test of commitment to creating an authentic and compassionate culture.

Integrity and Mastery. Mastery is our commitment to learning, especially about how to use ourselves in a productive way. Integrity is our willingness to live out our vision, even against all odds.

Claiming Our Autonomy by Creating a Vision

Autonomy is the decision we make to act on our own choice. The most fundamental choice we make is to create a future of our own choosing. In some ways, the future is the cause of our current behavior.[4] We have a vision or an image of where we wish to head and the kind of organization we wish to create, and we act in ways that we believe are in pursuit of creating that future.

The alternative, which is the dependent choice, is to act on a future of someone else's creation. We ask the organization to tell us its vision, its values, and how it wants us to operate, and then that becomes our guidepost.

The payoff for autonomy is that we live our own life and have control over our own destiny. The payoff for dependency is that if we act on someone else's choice and it does not work out well, it is not our fault. Dependency is the wish not to be responsible and held accountable for our actions or our direction. It is the choice for innocence. Autonomy is the choice for guilt. When we act on our own choices, we define our own future. The good news is we have the sense of being in control of our lives. The bad news is that it's our fault and there's no one else to blame.

The initial step toward autonomy for those of us in organizations is to put into words the future we wish to create for our own unit. This is called a vision of greatness. We describe a preferred future that we are committing ourselves to and committing our unit to. The belief is that this vision will be good for the individual, good for the unit, and good for the organization. Creating this vision is our essential act of leadership.

The bureaucratic orientation involves asking people above

4. Thanks to Joel Henning for the concept that our current actions can be understood by looking at the future we desire. It is a hopeful way of looking at behavior because it implies that we need not be controlled by our own history.

us, top management, to define the future they wish for the organization. If there is no vision at the top of the organization, we are off the hook. Organizations are so complex and so large, it's often very difficult for a top management group to articulate an understandable vision of the future. Even if top management does create a vision, as many companies are now doing, it is up to each individual employee, in the context of the organization's mission and purpose, to create his or her own vision of the future.

What Is a Vision and Why Is It Important?

Creating a vision forces us to take a stand for a preferred future. It makes the entrepreneurial cycle work because it gives us something we are willing to risk for. The vision is also our way of discovering that serving the organization also serves our self-interest.

We give leadership when we create a vision that positions our unit in relation to the customer and our own colleagues. Our vision channels our deepest values into the workplace and becomes a word picture of how we want our values to be lived out in our unit.

Not just any vision will do. Because we choose to pursue our vision in the marketplace, it needs to be both *strategic* and *lofty*.[5] The strategic element of a vision involves staying focused on our customers/users and expressing in the vision how we contribute to the mission of the organization. This helps connect each activity in our unit with something important, namely, the success of the business.

The vision needs to be lofty in order to capture our imagination and engage our spirit. Inspired performance is characterized by a lofty vision. When the vision for our unit is an expres-

5. Framing the vision this way is the creation of Bob Anderson. He has been helpful in both making the notion of vision more practical and being a role model for what committing ourselves to living out a vision looks like.

48

sion of our own values, we stay aligned with the organization at a very personal level. Our enlightened self-interest is reinforced when we can commit ourselves to something that matters.

Our vision is our deepest expression of what we want. This declaration of a desired future creates the conditions for having an aligned team. The vision works because only if others know what we want can they support us. It is the dialogue about vision that helps us connect with each other in a way that matters. Our vision can, at times, be a source of conflict, but more often it is a source of connection.

Our vision is very different from our goals and objectives. Goals and objectives are basically a prediction of what is to come. Predictions of what we are going to do in the next week or month or quarter are basically an extension of what we have done the last week or month or quarter. As a result, goals and objectives tend to be rather limited and, in some ways, are rather depressing. Research by Ron Lippitt indicates that during the course of goal-setting meetings, participants become more and more depressed. This discouragement occurs in part because it reinforces the belief that the future will be no different from the past.

An antidote to the feeling that the future will be much like the past is letting go of the objectives and beginning to articulate a vision for our unit. A vision is the preferred future, a desirable state, an ideal state. It is an expression of optimism despite the bureaucratic surrounding or the evidence to the contrary. We dramatize the need for optimism by asking ourselves not only to create a vision but to make it *great.* The word *greatness* is in many ways a very threatening word. When you ask people to create a vision of greatness, they respond by saying, "Can't we create a vision of progress—a vision of excellence —a vision of next steps?"

The wish to hedge against the word *greatness* is to hedge against committing ourselves to something we may not be able to achieve. We fear that greatness is simply not in our story but only in the story of others. Greatness demands that we eliminate caution, that we eliminate our reservations, and that we have hope in the face of the history of our limitations.

The dependent side of ourselves wishes to take a predictable path and to choose maintenance instead of greatness. This is the bureaucratic choice. If we choose to maintain what we now have, we know that is a goal that we can probably accomplish. The dependent side of ourselves feels that leadership essentially lies with other people. The act of leadership is fundamentally the act of articulating a vision and acting in pursuit of that vision. If we basically believe that the leadership of this organization lies in the hands of others, then we are destined to have a maintenance orientation about our own unit. The belief that leadership lies in the hands of others and the future is for others to decide is our desire to stay away from the frontier. The frontier represents danger, unpredictability, and essential loss of control. Better to stay on the East Coast, with developed cities, modern conveniences, and predictable environment, even if it's not to our satisfaction, than to head West with the wagon trains into unchartered territory and certain danger.

To take the safe path in an organization is to avoid the frontier and to ask others to chart that territory for us. In our dependency, we surround ourselves with corporate insulation. We demand a lot of data before we make a decision; we act in the short run because it's more predictable and under our control. We only do those things that have extremely visible results because we can measure progress and defend ourselves against accusations that what we're doing is not working.

When we choose the frontier, we're choosing an unmeasurable and unknowable future. This is a vulnerable choice because if we are forced to explain why we choose that future, how we're going to get there, or whether that future is possible, we have no solid response that we can count on. Moving toward the frontier, creating a vision of greatness, demands an act of faith. Faith, by its nature, is unmeasurable and indefensible through the use of data and external evidence. An act of faith moving toward a preferred future is a leap beyond what is now being experienced. This act of faith and act of courage are demanded of each of us if we wish to choose autonomy and put our survival into our own hands.

Faith in our ability to find meaning and be of service is

expressed by our vision. Putting into words our own vision of greatness for the future has several effects on us.

1. In an implicit way, it signifies our disappointment with what exists now. To articulate our vision of the future is to come out of the closet with our doubts about the organization and the way it operates, our doubts about the way our unit serves its customers, and our doubts about the way we deal with each other inside the organization.

2. The vision exposes the future that we wish for our unit and opens us up to potential conflict with the visions of other people. We know in our hearts that visions are not negotiable, and therefore we run the risk of conflicting visions when we put them into words with each other.

3. Articulating a vision of greatness also forces us to hold ourselves accountable for acting in a way that is congruent with that vision. The vision states how we want to work with customers and users, and the vision states how we want to work with each other. Once we have created a vision and communicated it to the people around us, it becomes a benchmark for evaluating all of our actions. This is an uneasy reality to live within. The power of the vision is in the way it forces internal accountability for our actions. If we are acting on someone else's vision, we can justify actions we don't believe in by claiming that we had no choice; they were demanded by the direction that someone else created. You hear this excuse all the time. If we are driven by a vision of our *own* creation, this excuse disappears and we can no longer make the claim that it's not our fault. We have to listen to the disquieting words of others about how we are not acting in the pursuit of that vision.

The hardest thing for any of us is to live by the rules that we create. It's difficult enough to live by the rules that others create. It is brutal and fierce to live by the rules that we create. When we create the vision for our unit, we create a set of requirements and demands on ourself, simply because they're our own creation.

To avoid creating a vision for oneself is to protect oneself from disappointment and failure. It is hard to comprehend how pervasive this wish for protection is. When we ask people to

51

change, the first conversation is about the risks of changing. When we do training in workshops and try to give people new skills, their first question is "Does top management support these new skills and behaviors?" A tremendous amount of literature and thinking says that every change program has to start at the top and has to be fully supported by top management before one can expect people in the middle and at the bottom to move in any direction. This belief in "top down" change is a wish to be protected.

To choose autonomy and create our own vision is to choose a risky path. It is to act on the belief that there is no safe path. Any future we move toward has hazards, and the fact that what we do has risks is a sign that we're headed in the right direction. When we choose protection and opt to maintain what we already have, we believe that what we have accomplished is enough. It's a willingness to stand on our laurels.

The choice for maintenance expresses the desire to get out of the stock market and put our money in a safe place, knowing that there is enough there for us to wade into shore. When we ask people to move in the direction of their own autonomy, we ask them to bet their savings. This violates the patriarchal contract most of us have with large organizations. We join large organizations because we think we'll be safe and "they" will provide for our future. Unfortunately, we may discover too late that the "safe" path was not very safe.

The first step in choosing autonomy, then, is to create our own vision of greatness for our function. When we create a vision of greatness, we give meaning to what we are doing, knowing all along that the odds of achieving greatness are small. Greatness is the entrepreneurial choice. It is the belief, whether we like it or not, that leadership is solely up to us. It is the choice to live on the frontier, to avoid insulation, and to choose the cold, knowing that we may in some way fail and be disappointed. The mere fact that we call it a vision raises the question of whether it's really achievable, and in fact visions may not be and often are not achievable.

Positive political skills and the entrepreneurial path are initiated by our statement of the desired future. Our actions are

then totally in pursuit of that vision. To create the vision and act in pursuit of it is to be autonomous, entrepreneurial, and political in a positive sense. Doing this is political because it goes against the norms that dominate most large or middle-sized organizations. Most organizations, for the reasons described in Part One, emphasize safety, control, and dependency. Thus, to choose autonomy and to create our own vision is to move against the tide. Any act against the tide in pursuit of a vision or a purpose is a political act. It is an act in our own self-interest; it is an act that advocates something we believe in, and by its nature it is political.

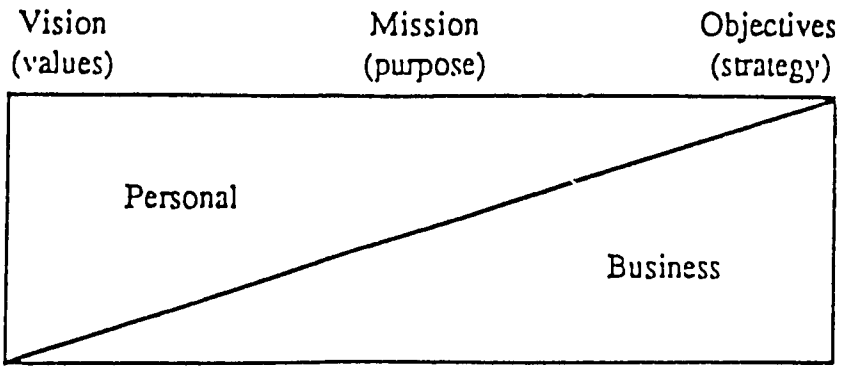
What If We Don't Have a Vision? A vision statement is an expression of optimism. Often when you ask individuals what their vision of greatness is, they say they don't have a vision of greatness. The response to that is to say, "Suppose you had a vision of greatness; what would it be?" A vision exists within each of us, even if we have not made it explicit or put it into words. Our reluctance to articulate our vision is a measure of our despair and a reluctance to take responsibility for our own lives, our own unit, and our own organization. A vision statement is an expression of hope, and if we have no hope, it is hard to create a vision.

The Difference Between a Vision and a Mission Statement. A vision is really a dream created in our waking hours of how we would like the organization to be. It differs from a mission statement in that a mission statement is a statement of what business we are in and sometimes our ranking in that business.

The mission statement names the game we are going to play. As an example, a large health care company's mission statement is "to market health care products that have a demonstrable health benefit to the customer, to be the leader in each product line, to return a fair profit to our stockholders, and to provide good opportunities to our employees." This tells us something about the business the company is choosing. "Demonstrable health benefit" means no cosmetics or other personal care products. "Leader in each product line" means if

the company can't grab a major market share it isn't going to try. "Fair profit" means certain margins and return on investment are required. This is more business focused than a vision. A vision is more a philosophy about how we are going to manage the business. Figure 9 contrasts vision, mission, and objectives.

Figure 9. Vision, Mission, and Objectives.



There is nothing new or unique about creating a vision statement. Many organizations have had a vision for many years. They may call it something different, such as a credo, set of core values, or guiding principles. In the last three years almost every company has developed a statement of values in its effort to articulate what its culture is. What is unique is the orientation that it is the task of each employee, not just top management, to create a vision of greatness. The common pattern is for top management to spend six months defining a vision and then to put great emphasis on communicating it downward throughout the organization. The belief is that the act of leadership is to create a vision and then to enroll the rest of the organization in supporting that vision. One executive said, only half joking, "Let's rent Candlestick Park [a sports stadium outside San Francisco] and have all 43,000 of our employees marching in support of our vision." A rewarding fantasy for the executive, but a dependency-creating process for the employees. The act of creating and communicating a vision is an act of leadership, and each employee needs to do this. The process begins at the top, but the additional step that is required is then to demand that each level beneath the top group do the same. It is

the job of each manager to create a vision for the unit. The vision of top management and the people above becomes input for the vision created by each lower level manager and employee. All individuals who want to be entrepreneurial and to take ownership for the business have to create their own vision.

Since most people beneath the top have not struggled with creating their own vision, what follows are some guidelines for doing just that. The guidelines cover three basic steps: creating the vision, communicating our vision, and coaching others in creating their vision. For simplicity's sake the guidelines for the first step will be stated in the form of tips.

Creating the Vision

Here are some thoughts on how to begin to create your vision.

Tip No. 1: Forget About Being Number One. You can't watch television these days without having someone stick an index finger in your face and shout, "We're number one, we're number one!" The wish to be on top, the desire for recognition, fame, fortune, profits, the bottom line, all reflect a myopic self-interest to get ahead. They don't belong in our vision statement. The vision statement expresses the contribution we want to make to the organization, not what the external world is going to bestow upon us. The choice for greatness is an act of service and an expression of our enlightened self-interest. If there is justice in the world, we will be rewarded for our good work. We claim our independence by focusing on the good work, not on where we end up in the standings. The vision of greatness is a statement of what we offer our customers and each other, and we commit to the vision because the vision is worth pursuing for its own sake. If we get rewarded for making the vision happen, we will accept the recognition gracefully—but that is not why we pursue it.

Tip No. 2: Don't Be Practical. We live in a pragmatic culture in which we have been taught to set specific measurable objectives and to have a work plan or a chart on our wall that

shows how we are going to meet those objectives. Our desire to be practical works against the creation of a vision. A vision of greatness expresses the spiritual and idealistic side of our nature. It is a preferred future that comes from the heart, not from the head. Being practical too quickly acts as a restraint on the vision. Our purpose in creating the vision is to clarify the kind of unit we wish to create, knowing all along that we may never get there. The vision is a lighthouse giving us direction rather than a specific destination. The last thing we want to ask someone who is creating a vision is "How are you going to get there?"

Tip No. 3: Begin with Your Customers. The long-term survival of an organization is dependent upon how well the organization stays in touch with and serves its internal and external customers. In the short run it can sustain itself through price increases, cost control, or a friendly banker, but ultimately the reality of the marketplace determines the organization's future. This also applies to a department operating within a larger organization.

The mind-set required to be an entrepreneur for our unit is to view other units within the company as either our customers or our suppliers. The group next in line receiving our product or service is a customer of ours. Viewing this group as a customer acts as a restraint on complaints about how it uses what we give it. Most of the fights and conflict in organizations occur between units and people at the same level. The rules are fairly clear about how we work with bosses and subordinates, but they are very unclear about how we work with those at the same level. We don't know how much power and control we have over our equals. In fact, sometimes we don't know whether we should be competing with them or collaborating with them.

The way through this competitive/collaborative ambivalence is for each function to ask itself who its internal customers/users are and to create a vision, a preferred future, of how it wants to work with them. Then we are ready to ask some additional useful questions:

1. If our internal customers/users were the only customers we had, how would we treat them?
2. How can we use their frustration and disappointment with us as a learning experience to teach us how to improve our way of doing business. We learn how to serve our marketplace mostly through dissatisfied customers. To learn from dissatisfied customers, we have to move toward them, treat them with respect, and listen to them very carefully, without being defensive.
3. How do we deliver bad news to our users? Sometimes we cannot fulfill our promises to them. How early do we tell them? When we let them down, do we blame it on someone else or take responsibility for our mistakes?
4. How do we handle situations in which our customers let us down? What do we do when they are inaccurate in defining their needs, when they owe us information and we either don't get it or get it so late that it undermines our schedules? We have the choice of whether to use this as an excuse, blame the customers, or have the orientation that we should help our customers become better at their own business. It is part of our function to help customers be more effective in their own way of operating. We are consultants to our customers, constantly showing them ways to better work with us.

Here are some examples of ideas from a variety of vision statements about what greatness looks like when we are dealing with customers:

- We act as partners with our customers.
- We are committed to our customers' success, and we encourage them to teach us how to do business with them.
- Our customers leave us feeling understood.
- The purpose of a sales call is to help the customer make a good decision.
- We fulfill every promise, meet every requirement.
- We have the courage to say no.
- We choose quality over speed.

- We don't cover up bad news.
- We don't want customers who care only about cost. They will pay a premium for quality service, being understood, and our commitment to their success.
- We want everyone involved to express real feelings and stay engaged.
- We want to understand the impact of our actions on our customers.
- We offer and expect forgiveness from our customers.
- Our customers are as important as our shareholders.
- We exceed their expectations.
- We don't force solutions on our customers.
- We are here to help, not to police.
- Our dissatisfied customers teach us how to sell to those who currently do not use our service or product.

All of these statements make sense. It is up to us to decide which ones are personally important to us and what similar additional statements we want to make for our own unit. The power of these statements is that they become the internally generated rules by which we hold ourself accountable. If you want to take a taste of the meal instead of just continuing to read the menu, take a minute right now and write down some statements of your vision of greatness in working with your customers.

Tip No. 4: You Can't Treat Your Customers Any Better Than You Treat Each Other. An additional vital element in a vision is how we treat each other within the unit. Each of our customers wants a unique and understanding response from us. If, within the unit, we are cautious, competitive, and judgmental with each other, we won't be able to give our customers the response they want. Sales people in a store treat us much the same as they are being treated. If we, as customers, are being ignored, they as employees are probably being ignored. If they are cold, indifferent, and unresponsive, we have some very good clues as to the management style of their supervisors. We have to manage our own people in a way that is absolutely aligned with the way we want our customers and users to be

managed. We can't use fear and punishment to improve customer service. Our employees' ultimate revenge is to take out on our customers resentment and frustration that should rightfully be aimed at us.

Our own unit is also our testing ground for discovering what is possible for organizations. One of our primary purposes is to create within our own unit a model of how we want the whole organization to function. Here are some useful questions for creating a vision for the internal operation of your unit:

1. How do you want support to be expressed within the group? In most groups support is expressed by leaving people alone. As long as you do not make a mistake, I won't bother you. The alternative is to believe that people need to learn what they are doing right. Appreciation can be expressed directly, credit given freely, celebrations held for successes.
2. How do you want conflict and disagreement managed? Traditional methods are to avoid, smooth over, or arm wrestle under pressure. People go to an umpire when they get stuck. You may decide you want to value compassionate confronting or negotiating behavior as vital to the unit.
3. What is the balance you want between having a team operation and having a series of competent individuals with clearly separated areas of responsibility? Many groups talk about teamwork but really operate on a one-to-one basis with their boss.
4. Competition within departments or between departments is a mixed motive situation. We know we are supposed to work together, yet almost all of the performance evaluation systems have people competing with each other. What stance do you want to take on internal competition? The president of a West Coast garment manufacturer decided he was going to evaluate his key executives according to how much they contributed to each other's success. Radical idea.

An endless number of values can get expressed in stating how we want people to work together. It is up to all of us to

ask ourselves which are the values and beliefs we hold most dearly about human interaction. These very personal values drive our vision of greatness for the people within our group. Here are some more examples of statements people have made:

- We want consistency between our plans and actions.
- A willingness to share.
- Disagree without fear.
- Commitment to a long-term strategy.
- Create a safe workplace.
- We want to live our values.
- Have each person connected with the final product.
- Treat each person in a unique way.
- Overcome levels and hierarchy.
- Our employees are as important as our stockholders.
- Our people are the business.
- A positive attitude, less energy on bad situations.
- We want to see caring and love in all our actions.
- Every person is responsible for building the business.
- Work as a team.
- Each person has a place at the table.
- Each person feels valued and respected.
- Provide meaningful work.
- Managers exist to serve their employees.
- Eliminate nonproductive work.
- Each person has the right to say no.
- Control of our own destiny.
- Freedom to fail. People are shot only for not trying.
- Honesty at all times.
- Empathy for others' pain.
- Each person is heard and understood.

As with the vision statements about our customers, these statements are compelling. It is up to us to know our own values and decide which we want expressed through our work. Take another minute here and think about your own vision of greatness for the people you work with.

Tip No. 5: If Your Vision Statement Sounds Like Motherhood and Apple Pie and Is Somewhat Embarrassing, You Are on the Right Track. A vision is an expression of hope and idealism. It oversimplifies the world and implies that anything is possible. The embarrassment we may feel is really our vulnerability at taking a stance of innocence in the midst of an environment that seems sophisticated, hard-nosed, and pragmatic. Surrounded by a preoccupation with safety, control, and approval, we stand naked and declare that there are certain deeper values, often spiritual ones, that we are giving top priority. We bet the farm on a set of values about customers and our own people and pray that the world will support us. Others tell us it is a jungle out there, and we say, "No it's not; that's only foliage." The vulnerability we feel means we are moving against the culture or working to recreate the culture, and that is what makes a strong vision statement a positive political act. At the very moment we are identifying and communicating our vision, we are living the kind of organization we have wished all along to create.

We know we create a great vision when it has three qualities:

1. *It comes from the heart.* A vision is in some ways unreason-able. The heart knows no reason. When our vision asks too much of us, we should begin to trust it.
2. *We, alone, can make this statement.* The statement needs to be recognizable as ours. It needs to be personal, and those who know us should be able to recognize who it came from.
3. *It is radical and compelling.* A vision dramatizes our wishes. This makes it radical and demanding. Radical in the best sense of service rather than rejection. Our willingness to take a unique stand is what empowers us.

Some Examples of the Choice for Greatness. People at the top of organizations are now creating a vision for their company. Examples of a few of these visions follow. What is even

- 61

more encouraging is that individual managers are committing themselves to a vision for their department. Some of the examples are very short, some a little wordy; all are compelling.

Electrical and Electronics Division,
Ford Motor Company

- Have a directed destiny.
- The customer is king.
- People are our most important resources.
- Treat suppliers as we wish to be treated.
- Become the standard by which others are judged.

The Greenwich Workshop
(Fine Art Dealer)

- The collector comes first.
- Quality is reputation.
- Art demands originality.

Cliff Bolster,
Vice-President of Human Resources,
Bath Iron Works

- Treat every person with whom we come in contact with respect and dignity.
- Deal with the divisions we service as if they are valued customers and, if they chose to, could find another source for the services we provide.
- Demonstrate by our actions, the way we want the whole company to operate.
- Minimize discussing and writing and maximize acting and doing to achieve our objectives.
- Take full responsibility for the quality of our departments' performance and don't blame others.
- Never hear the phrase "That's not my job."

62

- Give each other feedback on what we want from each other.
- Recognize achievement and celebrate success.

The next vision statement was written by Bob Haas, president and chief executive officer of Levi Strauss and Company. What is so impressive about it is that it affirms a set of values with the belief that these are the values that will best serve the bottom line and the customer. What is also impressive is the commitment made by a group of top executives that their primary job is to be the ones who personally act on these values in their dealings with each other and the rest of the organization.

Greatness for LS&Co.

I want LS&Co. to become and to be known as a great company. Our greatness will reflect a commitment to excellence in everything we do and with all constituents. We will achieve greatness through a commitment to the following goals and practices:

People

- Establish a climate of openness, mutual respect and teamwork.
- Encourage initiative and risk-taking.
- Create a small-company environment.
- Value each employee as an individual; profit from diversity.
- Maximize personal contributions, sense of involvement.
- Maximize individual development and sense of fulfillment.
- Minimize policies; emphasize individual responsibility; achieve full understanding of

company values and direction. This becomes the basis for individual commitment and action.

- Recognize contribution and excellence.
- Ensure that everyone understands how he/she can contribute and where he/she stands.
- Provide a safe, wholesome working environment that is stimulating, pleasant and supports maximum personal effectiveness.
- Create a caring, "family" environment.
- Link company and employee interests.
- Commitment to "ego-less" management; the welfare of the company and its people transcends individual goals and concerns.
- Support maximum individual productivity.
- Emphasize compassion and flexibility so that human needs (rather than rules and policies) are met.

Customers

- Ensure that LS&Co. products are *demonstrably superior* and provide the highest performance (appearance, durability, comfort, style) and at the fairest price (value).
- Make product innovation a hallmark of LS&Co.
- Handle customer inquiries, concerns and complaints in a prompt, fair and courteous manner.
- Advertise and promote LS&Co. products in a truthful, respectful and engaging manner in association with wholesome non-exploitive media and programming.

Accounts (Retail Stores)

- Assist each account in achieving maximum profitability and desired market position with our merchandise.
- Provide superior service.
- Be viewed as knowledgeable of each account's needs and a helpful source of support and business counsel.
- Be valued for superior account relations (courtesy, integrity, responsiveness).

Suppliers

- Encourage long-standing, mutually profitable business relationships.
- Develop the highest component quality standards (fabric, sundries, etc.); clearly define expectations and assist suppliers in achieving satisfactory performance.
- Involve suppliers in solving problems and developing innovative and superior products.
- Be viewed as knowledgeable of each supplier's capabilities and needs and a helpful source of support and business counsel.
- Be valued for superior supplier relations (courtesy, integrity, responsiveness).

The final vision statement is from my own small consulting company. It is a little embarrassing to put this in here, and it sounds a little like motherhood and apple pie, but since this whole section is about creating a vision, I seem to have no choice but to include it.

Designed Learning

1. We treat all people who come in contact with us as members of our organization. Each cli-

ent, supplier, and member of the larger community that contacts us feels understood and cared for. They experience us as acting with integrity even when we choose not to give them what they want. They have the feeling that we are in business to serve and not to exploit others for financial gain. We treat all as family members, and we want each to experience something of value as a result of the contact with us.

2. We are committed to providing the highest quality, people, learning designs, and materials that are within our capability. Quality means we are congruent with our deepest human values, we deal with underlying issues in our clients, not just the surface ones, and our services are practical and immediately usable. We are in the education business and believe quality education confronts the whole person, tells the truth, and aims right at the center of an issue. Quality means that we will not provide services where they are not needed, even if on occasion a client would be willing to hire us inappropriately. We take our commitments very seriously and we only promise what we can deliver.

3. We market by giving clients as much as we have every moment we are with them. We don't want to tease, lure, or create unneeded dependency for the sake of generating more business.

4. We treat our employees and suppliers as well as we treat our clients. Our economic philosophy is to pay our employees as much as we can and charge our clients as little as we can. We want our employees to feel that this is their business and when the business does well

66

> they will do well. We also want people to share in the downside risk. If some individuals are not valued highly, they need to know that so that they can make a good decision about their future.

These examples are here simply to give an idea of the kind of focus a vision statement might have. The heart of a vision is not so much in the actual words but in the act of creating it and committing ourself to it. When we create and communicate a vision, we are inviting others to let us know when we are fulfilling it and when we are falling short. That creates accountability for us and is the way we force ourselves to take responsibility for our unit. That's why it is not enough for just top management to create a vision. Every employee needs to go through the process. Once we have a vision, the next steps are to communicate it and to coach others in creating their own vision.

Communicating Our Vision

The essence of political skill is building support for our function and our projects. This takes place through dialogue, and the most compelling dialogue we can have is about our vision. Leadership is keeping others focused on the vision, and this means that we have to get comfortable talking about it. We can talk about the vision statement in ways that help command others' interest.

Optimism. We need to communicate hope and optimism. Even though we have doubts about how to reach the vision, it is a statement of a preferred future. If we have committed ourselves to reaching for that future, talking about it with conviction will always be persuasive. Others will often support us simply because of how much we care. The more we talk about the vision, the more committed we become. Our doubts about whether others will support our vision are really a projection of our own doubts. Talking about the vision frequently has the

effect of reducing those doubts and allowing us to be more optimistic.

Emotional Charge. We need to feel free to use color and excitement in our language. Words like greatness, service, meaning, perfection, compassion, integrity, love are emotionally charged words that we can get excited about. They may seem out of place in a work environment. They are not literally "out of place"; they are just rare. Emotionally charged words may not belong in a goal-setting conversation, but they are the stuff that visions are made of. Perhaps our unique contribution to our unit is to keep us focused on a deeper set of values than simply costs and productivity. We have to believe that most people are searching for meaning, compassion, and integrity at work and that if we are willing to talk about those things, awkward as it may be, it increases our possibility of finding them.

Metaphors. Using metaphors, parables, picture images is also helpful. We need an image that has meaning for us, an image that gives others a picture of our vision. People have likened their vision to a variety of things:

- a tree, with a trunk, branches, leaves, seasons, changes, growth;
- the human body, with its different systems, kept going by fresh air and a supply of fresh blood;
- sports teams (a particular favorite of men);
- machinery, cars, airplanes, gyroscopes, radar, submarines;
- a painting, a poem, a string quartet or orchestra.

Which image doesn't matter—only that it is something that we care about.

Specific Picture of the Future. The more we can see what the future would look like, the easier it is for us to understand and communicate it to others. It helps sometimes to fantasize that we are in a time capsule, visiting our unit three years from now, and hovering above like a helicopter. Describe what we

would see happening. How would we be working with customers and each other? What would meetings look like, what would the budget look like, what would be the nature of our projects, how would people be spending their time, what would the product or service look like as it came out the door?

All of these qualities of a vision statement help us to communicate. Talking about our vision in a vivid way also encourages other people to do the same.

Coaching Others in Creating Their Vision

An important part of our leadership role is to work with subordinates to help them put into words their own vision of greatness for the future. Our goal is not simply to have others embody *our* vision but to support others in embodying *their* vision. It is an expression of our belief that there is more than one answer. Often when we ask people what their vision is, they say that they don't have a vision. Don't you believe it. Each of us has hopes for a preferred future; it is just that we get so used to responding to others' expectations of us that our own vision remains at an unconscious level. Saying that we don't have a vision can also be an expression of our pessimism. If the prospect of having any control over our own destiny seems like a remote possibility, it is hard to generate any energy for talking about a future of our own choosing. Don't be seduced by passivity or pessimism. Here is a series of questions we have been using to help people discover their own vision.

1. Pick an important project you are working on that you care about and are frustrated with. Describe the goals of the project and why you are frustrated.

2. Next ask why you care so much about the project. Our frustration is an expression of our commitment. If we were not so committed to a project, we would not be so frustrated. We ask people why they care so much about the project as a way of getting at their deeper values about their work. We all have strong values about doing work that has meaning, being of real service to our customers, treating other people well, and maintaining some integrity in the way we work. Keep asking

why, why, why until you hear some statements that seem to come from the heart.

3. Ask what your ideal way of working with your customers looks like. If you revisited your unit three years from now and greatness had been achieved, what would you see happening with customers?

4. Now ask the same questions about the future focusing on how you think people should treat each other in the unit. What personal and even spiritual values would you like to see expressed in the way the group operates internally?

These questions will help begin the dialogue about vision. In coaching others there are three qualities we want to look for in their statements: depth, clarity, and responsibility.

Depth. Since the vision statement comes from the heart, it should be as personal as possible.

Clarity. We can help people to be specific by continually asking what they would see if greatness became a reality. Vagueness is a way of not making a commitment to the vision.

Responsibility. A major obstacle to creating a vision is a feeling of helplessness. Victims generate boring vision statements. Asking people to create a vision statement is a way of confronting their feeling of helplessness. The primary reason we demand that people create a vision statement is to reinforce the belief that all of us are engaged in the process of creating this organization, whether we admit it or not. We keep urging people to talk about the unit as if it were theirs to transform in any way that they choose.

The coaching process takes patience. After people are first asked to create a vision, it often takes days or weeks before they are able to come up with a statement that they can get excited about. The patience and effort are worth it. The struggle to create a vision is the struggle with hope and whether our unit is in fact ours to create. As managers we begin to empower those around us when we help and gently pressure them to do the same. The vision statement itself becomes an expression of our enlightened self-interest—namely, how our unit provides meaning, service, contribution, integrity, compassion, and mastery. The process of creating the vision serves to reinforce our

intention for an entrepreneurial contract. Once we become clear about our vision of greatness, our task is to begin to act on the vision by creating structures, policies, and practices that support it. Actions grow from each of our specific visions and will be idiosyncratic to our own situation.

To add to the menu of possibilities, here are some specific steps several companies are taking to support their vision of creating an entrepreneurial and empowered culture (which is also the vision behind this book). The goal is to have every aspect of organizational life be congruent with the vision. This takes us from policies and practices all the way to office location and decor. Listed below are brief statements of vision and some actions being taken to support those visions.

Vision: Serve the customer above all else.

Action: 1. *Adopt a philosophy that good selling is helping the customer/user make a good decision.* Our philosophy of selling is to help the buyer make a good decision. This is different from the belief that the purpose of our selling effort is to convince someone to support our project. If we think of top management or of other departments as our customers, our goal is to maintain a high-quality, long-term relationship. We want customers for life. If we convince them to buy something that is not in their best interest, in the short run we get support for our projects; in the long run we have sacrificed our credibility. If through the use of successful persuasive techniques we gain support for a project that does not work or is not really needed, we have, in effect, mortgaged our future.

The pressure is immense in each of us to generate budget support, increase sales, engage in innovative work, and contribute something of unique value to the organization. If we allow that pressure to lead us into making promises we can't keep, we are in trouble. Helping our users make good decisions is a different goal than that of increasing sales, budget, and manpower. A commitment to the quality of our

customers' decisions is a positive political act in the midst of a culture that values quantity, size, and growth above all else.

Traditional selling techniques emphasize overcoming objections and closing the deal. The best sales organizations don't worry too much about closing techniques but focus on helping the customer, inside the company or outside the company, feel understood and supported. People buy where they feel understood. Better to help our users make a good decision, even if it means that we don't make the sale, than to sell something that is unneeded or may not work.

2. *Customer contact.* Everyone, in every department, is given the opportunity to spend time with customers. The concept is that everyone is responsible for customer knowledge.

Vision: Operate as a team in which everyone feels responsible for the success of the team.

Action: 1. *Performance criteria.* Evaluate subordinates according to what they have done to contribute to the success of their peers. Some managers believe that encouraging competition within the organization acts as a toughening motivational device. Sales people are publicly ranked according to sales performance. Different departments are given the same task to see who can come up with the best or quickest solution. Some individuals get publicly compared to others as a form of praise or motivation. These strategies serve to reinforce the belief that employees are here to advance their own career first and serve the organization second. They have it backwards.

2. *Peer recruitment.* Teams interview new employees so that each person shares the responsibility for selecting co-workers. Any one team member, including the boss, has veto power over a candidate.

Vision: The physical space reflects the fact that we are all partners in the business and we want to minimize dis-

12

tance and fears between levels in the organization and between different functions.

Action: 1. *Office location.* Relationships across departments are the difficult ones to manage. Place people from different departments next to each other. As you go down the hall, the sequence of offices might be marketing, finance, government regulation, research and development, manufacturing, and personnel—and then start all over again with a marketing office. A physical reminder that employees are all part of the same organization.

2. *Office size and decor.* All offices at every level are the same size and of the same attractiveness—comfortable but neither monastic nor luxurious.

3. *Dining rooms.* Luxury dining rooms and the cafeteria are open to everyone. Top management eats in the cafeteria as an antidote to isolation.

4. *Parking spaces.* First come, first served. Reward for getting there early.

5. *Meeting rooms.* The physical setting carries a symbolic statement of our intentions of how we want people to communicate with each other. If our intent is that everybody has a piece of the action, then a circle is the form we should choose. When we meet in a circle, there is no head or foot of the table and each person can easily see every other person. Long narrow rooms and tables, which are typical boardroom and executive-level arrangements, have the effect of reinforcing power differences. Narrow tables or even U-shaped tables inhibit dialogue because you literally cannot see those sitting on the same side of the table. You have to lean way forward or backward just to make eye contact.

For large management/employee meetings, stay away from the auditorium and use the cafeteria. Auditoriums, with unmovable seats and stages, are designed for a star system. The purpose of employee meetings is to reduce the distance between levels. Let the setting reflect that.

The cafeteria belongs to the employees. Meeting there is a way of management's coming to them. Cafeterias also lack the rigidity of an auditorium. Tables and chairs are movable, there is no stage, and there are no stars.

6. *Get the executives off the top floor.* If top management exists to support and serve the rest of the organization, put executives on the bottom floor. Let them be accessible. The intent is to reduce isolation. Executives don't need status symbols to be motivated and find meaning in their work. Creating physical symbols of status and power simply reinforces the message that we work to pursue our own myopic self-interest. Take away some of the trappings, and we should find out which executives are here to build a business and which are here to look good. We sometimes hear that elegant executive decor is really there to impress outsiders, customers, suppliers, bankers, and the community. This is a fragile rationale. If you really need this, have a few special rooms for this.

Of course we can get carried away with giving the physical setting too much importance. Sometimes a room is just a room. Architects and space planners, however, tend to have a rather traditional, patriarchal view of organization norms, status, and culture. The architecture and decor need to flow from our vision rather than dictate it.

Vision: People should feel support.

Actions: 1. *Blame-free meetings.* Create a ground rule forbidding any blaming statements. Be especially strict about blaming anyone not in the room. When we blame absent parties, what we don't realize is at the very instant we are blaming them, they are having the same conversation about us. If people in the room are so frustrated with each other that they have to express their negative feelings before they can get on with the business at hand, then allow twenty minutes of blaming statements. The ground rule for this dis-

74

cussion is that people in the room can *only* make blaming statements and may not defend themselves. After the twenty-minute period of blame is over, take a five-minute break and then reconvene and get on with the agenda.

2. *Give positive feedback.* Most organizations are a wasteland of support. It is hard for us to know what we are doing right. Even when we get good results, we aren't sure which of the myriad things we tried made the difference. Specific, positive, personal feedback has a potential that is virtually untapped in most cultures.

3. *Reduce threat as a strategy.* The fear of failure has been internalized enough by most people, the organization need do nothing to reinforce fear as a motivational device. Threats and even consistent negative feedback increase caution and indirect strategies. There is already enough in work life to put us on shaky ground without management using fear as a tool. Most of us are already certain that our sins will be punished and our good deeds go unnoticed.

3

Man Waiting for Motivation

TRANSFORMING LEADERSHIP

We often argue that the excellent companies are the way they are because they are organized to obtain extraordinary effort from ordinary human beings. It is hard to imagine that billion-dollar companies are populated with people much different from the norm for the population as a whole. But there is one area in which the excel-

Taken from: In Search of Excellence-Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies, Thomas J. Peters & Robert H. Waterman Jr., Harper & Row, Publishers, 1982, pages 81-86.

lent companies have been truly blessed with unusual leadership, especially in the early days of the company.

Leadership is many things. It is patient, usually boring coalition building. It is the purposeful seeding of cabals that one hopes will result in the appropriate ferment in the bowels of the organization. It is meticulously shifting the attention of the institution through the mundane language of management systems. It is altering agendas so that new priorities get enough attention. It is being visible when things are going awry, and invisible when they are working well. It's building a loyal team at the top that speaks more or less with one voice. It's listening carefully much of the time, frequently speaking with encouragement, and reinforcing words with believable action. It's being tough when necessary, and it's the occasional naked use of power—or the "subtle accumulation of nuances, a hundred things done a little better," as Henry Kissinger once put it. Most of these actions are what the political scientist James MacGregor Burns in his book *Leadership* calls "transactional leadership." They are the necessary activities of the leader that take up most of his or her day.

But Burns has posited another, less frequently occurring form of leadership, something which he calls "transforming leadership"—leadership that builds on man's need for meaning, leadership that creates institutional purpose. We are fairly sure that the culture of almost every excellent company that seems now to be meeting the needs of "irrational man," as described in this chapter, can be traced to transforming leadership somewhere in its history. While the cultures of these companies seem today to be so robust that the need for transforming leadership is not a continuing one, we doubt such cultures ever would have developed as they did without that kind of leadership somewhere in the past, most often when they were relatively small.

The transforming leader is concerned with minutiae, as well. But he is concerned with a different kind of minutiae; he is concerned with the tricks of the pedagogue, the mentor, the linguist—the more successfully to become the value shaper, the exemplar, the maker of meanings. His job is much tougher than that of the transactional leader, for he is the true artist, the true pathfinder. After

77

all, he is both calling forth and exemplifying the urge for transcendence that unites us all. At the same time, he exhibits almost boorish consistency over long periods of time in support of his one or two transcending values. No opportunity is too small, no forum too insignificant, no audience too junior.

Burns speaks most convincingly of the leader's need to enable his followers to transcend daily affairs. He begins by faulting earlier students of leadership for their preoccupation with power, suggesting that such attention blinded them to the far more important task of instilling purpose. "This absolutely central value [purpose] has been inadequately recognized in most theories," he maintains. "Leadership over human beings is exercised when persons with certain motives and purposes mobilize, in competition or conflict with others, institutional, political, psychological and other resources so as to arouse, engage and satisfy the motives of followers." In essence, Burns says, "Leadership, unlike naked power wielding, is thus inseparable from followers' needs and goals." He thereby sets the stage for a concise definition of transforming leadership:

> [Transforming leadership] occurs when one or more persons *engage* with others in such a way that leaders and followers raise one another to higher levels of motivation and morality. Their purposes, which might have started out separate but related, in the case of transactional leadership, become fused. Power bases are linked not as counterweights but as mutual support for common purpose. Various names are used for such leadership: elevating, mobilizing, inspiring, exalting, uplifting, exhorting, evangelizing. The relationship can be moralistic, of course. But transforming leadership ultimately becomes *moral* in that it raises the level of human conduct and ethical aspiration of both the leader and the led, and thus has a transforming effect on both. . . . Transforming leadership is dynamic leadership in the sense that the leaders throw themselves into a relationship with followers who will feel "elevated" by it and often become more active themselves, thereby creating new cadres of leaders.

Burns, like others, believes that leaders are appealing to certain unconscious needs: "The fundamental process is an elusive one; it is, in large part, *to make conscious what lies unconscious among*

followers." Taking Chairman Mao Tse-tung as exemplar, he comments: "His true genius was in understanding the emotions of others." The business psychologist Abraham Zaleznick makes much the same point in contrasting leaders and managers: "Managers prefer working with people; leaders stir emotion." The work of the psychologist David McClelland, notably in *Power: The Inner Experience,* provides an experimentally based description of the process:

> [We] set out to find exactly, by experiment what kinds of thoughts the members of an audience had when exposed to a charismatic leader.... They were apparently strengthened and uplifted by the experience; they felt more powerful, rather than less powerful or submissive. This suggests that the traditional way of explaining the influence of a leader on his followers has not been entirely correct. He does not force them to submit and follow him by the sheer overwhelming magic of his personality and persuasive powers.... In fact, he is influential by strengthening and inspiriting his audience.... The leader arouses confidence in his followers. The followers feel better able to accomplish whatever goals he and they share.

Picking up on one of Burns's main points, leader-followers symbiosis, we find two attributes of that symbiosis especially striking: believability and excitement. On the first count, believability, we find that our value-infused top-performing companies are led by those who grew up with the core of the business—electric engineering at HP or Maytag, mechanical engineering at Fluor or Bechtel. The star performers are seldom led by accountants or lawyers. On the second count, excitement, Howard Head, inventor and entrepreneur, father of the Head ski and the Prince tennis racket, exhorts: "You have to believe in the impossible." At Hewlett-Packard, top management's explicit criterion for picking managers is their ability to engender excitement.

A simple description of the process of finding excitement is provided by James Brian Quinn, who is, among other things, a long-term student of the real, sloppy process of finding and achieving overarching strategic values and objectives. Quinn quotes a consumer goods chief executive officer: "We have slowly discovered that our most effective goal is *to be best* at certain things. We now

try to get our people to help us work out what these things should be, how to define *best* objectively, and how to *become* best in our selected spheres. You would be surprised at how motivating that can be."

Warren Bennis has a good metaphor for the transforming leader—the leader as "social architect." But, to give credit where credit is due, Bennis, Burns, and we, in our comments on the excellent companies, were anticipated decades ago by both Chester Barnard, whom we'll meet again in the next chapter, and Philip Selznick, who published in 1957 an often-overlooked thin blue volume entitled *Leadership and Administration,* in which he says:

The inbuilding of purpose is a challenge to creativity because it involves transforming men and groups from neutral, technical units into participants who have a particular stamp, sensitivity, and commitment. This is ultimately an educational process. It has been well said that the effective leader must know the meaning and master the technique of the educator. . . . The art of the creative leader is the art of institution building, the reworking of human and technological materials to fashion an organism that embodies new and enduring values. . . . To institutionalize is to *infuse with value* beyond the technical requirements of the task at hand. The prizing of social machinery beyond its technical role is largely a reflection of the unique way it fulfills personal or group needs. Whenever individuals become attached to an organization or a way of doing things as persons rather than as technicians, the result is a prizing of the device for its own sake. From the standpoint of the committed person, the organization is changed from an expendable tool into a valued source of personal satisfaction. . . . The institutional leader, then, *is primarily an expert in the promotion and protection of values.*

We should pause briefly here, as we exalt values, to ask what values? Maybe, for one, we might suggest simply "to be best" in any area, as James Brian Quinn says, or to "be true to our own aesthetic," as Walter Hoving said of himself and Tiffany's. Perhaps it's Ray Kroc of McDonald's seeing "beauty in a hamburger bun," or Watson's "respect for the individual" at IBM, or Dana's belief in "the productive people" or "Forty-eight-hour parts service any-

where in the world" at Caterpillar. Corny? Only if we are cynical. Such values are transforming for the companies that live them.

Much of our discussion has verged on the high-sounding, for example, the talk of creating a transforming purpose. It *is* high-sounding, but at the same time it is simply practical. We have argued that man is quite strikingly irrational. He reasons by stories, assumes himself to be in the top 10 percent judged by any good trait, needs to stick out and find meaning simultaneously, and so on. Yet management practice seldom takes these foibles and limitations into account.

The excellent company managements, however, do take these things into account—either consciously or unconsciously. The result is better relative performance, a higher level of contribution from the "average" man. More significant, both for society and for the companies, these institutions create environments in which people can blossom, develop self-esteem, and otherwise be excited participants in the business and society as a whole. Meanwhile, the much larger group of nonexcellent performers seems to act, almost perversely, at odds with every variable we have described here. Losing instead of winning is the norm, as are negative rather than positive reinforcement, guidance by the rule book rather than tapestries of myths, constraint and control rather than soaring meaning and a chance to sally forth, and political rather than moral leadership.

COLLABORATIVE WORK ORGANIZATION

1. Chapter 3 "Performing Planning," from *Performance Planning and Appraisal,* by Patricia King. (required)

2. "Using MBO as a Supervisory Tool," Unpublished paper by James R. Brady. March, 1987 (optional)

USING M.B.O AS A SUPERVISORY TOOL

James R. Brady
USAID/Philippines

"If you don't know
where you are going,
any road will get you there.

Proverb...

Revised March 1987

USING M.B.O. AS A SUPERVISORY TOOL

James R. Brady

I. An Overview of MBO (Management by Objectives)

Albert Camus once observed: "If you lack character, you need a system." MBO or "Management by Objectives" provides a system for managers who may or may not manifest this lack. During the past 20 years, MBO has gained recognition as a useful management tool for improving the planning, implementation and evaluation of individual or group performance. MBO was initiated as a system for managing managers, but its use has expanded to cover a broad range of employees.

This paper describes some: (a) basic MBO concepts and (b) potential benefits and pitfalls of using MBO as a supervisory tool. Let's start with some definitions of MBO.

George Odiorne, one of the earliest writers on MBO, describes it as follows:

> "MBO is complicated, but it is deceptively simple in its underlying theory, which is: the first step in managing anything is to define your objective before you release any resources or spend any time trying to achieve it....
>
> "MBO is a process whereby the superior and subordinate managers of an organization jointly identify its common goals, define each individual's major areas of responsibility in terms of results expected, and use these measures as guides for operating the unit and assessing the contribution of each of its members....Management by objectives provides for the maintenance and orderly growth of the organization by stating what is expected for everyone involved and measuring what is actually achieved. It assigns risks to all responsible leaders and makes their progress---even their tenure---dependent upon producing results. It stresses the ability and achievements of leaders rather than their personality."1/

1/ (See end of paper for notes.)

Another writer, Karl Albrecht, takes a slightly different approach to defining MBO:

> "Management by Objectives is nothing more---nor less---than an observable pattern of behavior on the part of a manager, characterized by studying the anticipated future, determining what payoff conditions to bring about for that anticipated future, and guiding the efforts of the people of the organization so that they accomplish these objectives while deriving personal and individual benefits in doing so."[2]

Albrecht says that three conditions must be present before an organization can be said to be managing by objectives:

1. Objectives-oriented managers, who think in terms of payoffs and priorities.

2. Objectives-oriented workers, who take an interest in organizational goals.

3. A reward-centered environment, in which managers and workers work as partners in pursuing organizational goals.[3]

To summarize, MBO is a way of managing which focuses on the specific end results expected from each employee or group within a given time frame. Clear performance expectations and regular dialoguing and feedback are important elements of the process. In the ideal situation, overall organizational objectives are subdivided and passed on to groups and individuals at various levels of the hierarchy. The totality of individual and group objectives would thus encompass all of the organization's objectives.

However, you may find that this neat linkage between macro and micro objectives does not exist in your organization. Consequently, you have to decide whether your superiors will support the objectives that you want to set for your unit. Where higher level objectives are not clear, you may be able to use the MBO process to get your superiors to clarify and approve more specific objectives for your organization. This means that you discuss your unit's proposed objectives with your superiors and get their agreement before you initiate MBO agreements with your subordinates.

II. MBO As An Integrated Management "System"

In order to manage effectively in today's rapidly changing situation, you will need tools which help track overall unit performance over time. MBO views the organization as an open system or assemblage of interrelated and interdependent components. Starting with given organization objectives, the manager's job is to design and then coordinate the components of the system (inputs-activities-outputs) to achieve these objectives.

In other words, the objectives are the starting point for structuring and focusing your system; then you are concerned with efficiently converting inputs (resources) into outputs (goods, services, etc.) which lead you toward your objectives. The managers must ensure that system objectives and outputs reflect changing environmental conditions.

System components are interrelated. When you make a change in one part of your organization, this is likely to produce side-effects or repercussions elsewhere in the organization (e.g., the quality of staff appointments will affect the quantity and quality of your unit's outputs). However, this interdependence of components does not necessarily mean that you must wait until all parts of the system are ready before you try to innovate or improve operations. A systems orientation does mean that you should think about the broader implications of any proposed changes and try to prevent negative side effects. The manager must be responsible for coordinating all parts of the system so that it moves forward toward objectives. Conflict management is an integral part of the coordination task.

Another important responsibility of the manager is to mediate between the organization and the environment in which it operates. As Peter Drucker observes, it is easy to get bogged down in internal matters and neglect the external impact of the organization:

> "An organization is not, like an animal, an end in itself, and successful by the mere act of perpetuating the species. An organization is an organ of society and fulfills itself by the contribution it makes to the outside environment. And yet the bigger and apparently more successful an organization gets to be, the more will inside events tend to engage the interests, the energies, and the abilities of the executive to the exclusion of his real tasks and his real effectiveness in the outside."[4/]

Research by Rensis Likert and others has shown that the supervisor plays an important role as a linking pin between his/her unit and the higher levels of the organization. As a supervisor, you thus represent your unit with higher levels of management and mediate on behalf of your unit and your people. Your ability to exert influence up the line has an important impact on how your own staff perceive your supervisory effectiveness. 5/

This linking pin function is also important in establishing a positive organizational climate. A supervisor is affected by the attitudes and actions of her/his superiors and reflects these in interactions with subordinates. This suggests that the creation of positive attitudes should begin at the top of the organization and then be reflected down through the supervisory channels. However, even if you have a negative boss, you don't necessarily have to imitate her/him and treat your staff in the same fashion.

Leadership style (e.g., autocratic, democratic, or laissez faire) is also a factor which can affect staff productivity and morale. Some people have criticized MBO on the grounds that it has forced objectives upon employees instead of permitting them to partipate in the process. In fact, MBO is neutral as to leadership style and has been effective in both autocratic or democratic management situations.

Nevertheless, many writers have suggested that MBO works better with participative or democratic leadership styles. John Humble, a British executive, notes that MBO may be used to support Douglas McGregor's "Theory Y". A Theory Y manager assumes that most people find work natural and will effectively produce and control themselves on the job, if they share in setting their objectives and are rewarded for achievement. Theory Y is thus often equated with democratic or participative leadership. Humble suggests that effective employee performance requires: (1) participation in goal setting, (2) clarity of purpose, and (3) congruence of goals of individuals (i.e., shared goals). 6/

III. Components of an MBO Agreement

A. General Contents

MBO uses a written agreement between an organizational superior and his/her subordinate to achieve certain objectives over a given time period (often one year). In using MBO as a supervisory tool, you can begin by sitting down with each of your staff to agree on: clearly defined individual objectives, target dates, needed resources and support, indicators or measures of progress toward each objective, and dates for joint reviews of progress.

You should develop the MBO agreement in mutual informal exchanges with each subordinate. Once agreed to, the components are reduced to writing. However, you can also use a team approach and meet with your work group(s) to make a group agreement. The group then takes responsibility for achieving the objectives and shares collectively in the rewards for success.

An MBO agreement may include the following:

1. Brief descriptions of objectives and sub-objectives defined in specific operational terms (quantified where feasible).

2. Assignment of priority to each objectives (e.g., on a scale of 1 to 3 or High, Medium, or Low Priority).

3. Interim and final dates for achieving each objective.

4. Indicators for measuring progress toward each objective.

5. Resources or support needed by the employee from the supervisor to achieve each objective.

6. Dates for periodic discussions of progress toward objectives (at least quarterly) and dates for any required written reports.

After preparation, the MBO agreements should not be put on the shelf and forgotten until the annual Employee Evaluation Reports (EERs) are prepared. To be meaningful, the MBO agreements should be used as the basis for:

(a) allocating funds, staff, and other resources (inputs),

(b) evaluating the quality of performance (outputs), and

(c) providing organizational recognition and rewards according to progress made toward objectives in the agreement.

B. Types of Objectives

To be effective in guiding performance, an objective should be written, results-oriented, challenging but achievable, specific and clear, measurable, time-bound, and supported by organizational authority.[7]

There are three types of program, operational or performance objectives which can be included in an MBO agreement system:

1. Innovation objectives,

2. Problem Solving objectives, and

3. Routine objectives.

The MBO agreement may also include:

4. Professional Development objectives for each employee and

5. Organizational Development objectives for the organization as a whole or for individual units.

Let's examine each type of objective in more detail.

1. Innovation Objectives

Innovation is the introduction of new or improved programs or methods to achieve organizational goals. Since innovations are critical to the survival and growth of the organization, the supervisor and subordinate should ensure that the MBO agreement includes some innovation objectives. Certainly, managers are expected to be pushing for organizational change and innovation. As Odiorne observes:

> "No manager should be permitted to set goals for his or her position on the assumption that the status quo is good enough. The solution of perennial problems, or the introduction of new ideas to achieve better results than are presently being attained should be insisted upon during the goal-setting process....In order to be more than a system of relentlessly whipping the horses of change, however, MBO should begin with reality. It requires that four questions be answered in the goal-setting process:
>
> 1. Where are we now?
>
> 2. If we didn't do anything differently, where would we be in one, five or ten years? Do we like that answer?
>
> 3. If not, where would we like to be? (This is the beginning of the customary procedures of MBO.)
>
> 4. What are the optional courses open to us and which one shall we choose?"[8]

Almost any organization in a "modern" society is forced to change to keep abreast of changing external trends, conditions, or even "fads." We must develop new and better ways of achieving goals and satisfying operational constraints. Because of the long time span required for the approval of new programs or approaches in most large organizations, you may have to design new programs before your existing programs have matured. Moreover, if you have serious staff limitations (quantitative and qualitative) you may also have to be innovative and creative in your acquisition and use of your human resources. Human talent is probably the most critical resource you have for staying innovative and it merits your highest priority.

Innovations in methods could include: (1) improvements in organization structures or staff utilization; (2) streamlining of document processing or progress reporting; (3) increasing the effectiveness of systems for internal cooperation (e.g., meetings, clearances, or communications); or (4) adopting new technologies (e.g., microcomputers, telecommunications, and word processors). Innovations might also include procedural improvements to speed up the delivery of services or information to organizational clients or other "stakeholders" (suppliers, financiers, or employees).

Remember that the employee's MBO agreement should include only those program or operational objectives over which he/she can be expected to exercise some control. Performance toward innovative objectives is judged by the quality and scope of the tasks to be done and the completion of planned operational phases on time. However, in evaluating progress on innovations, consideration should be given to the uncertainties and delays which may be associated with efforts to introduce significant changes.

2. Problem-Solving Objectives

A "problem" can be defined as a undesired deviation from a performance standard which is perceived as important by someone whose opinion counts.[9/] This suggests that you must be able to identify the performance standard or correct condition before defining the problem to be solved. The objective is to correct the deviation and restore normal conditions or meet existing performance standards. Performance standards may be derived from organizational objectives, government rules and procedures, technical specifications, professional mores, etc.

Another approach is to see a problem as a gap between between where you are now (existing condition) and where you would like to be in the future (your objective or desired future condition). Following are some illustrative areas where problem-solving objectives might be defined:

(1) Improving the quality of ongoing regular activities to meet professional standards (i.e., reduce amateurism).

(2) Reducing the time required for internal clearance of routine documents.

(3) Making recurring reports more useful to consumers and eliminate reports which are not worth the effort.

(4) Organizing more effective staff meetings and meeting follow-up systems.

(5) Better allocating the office workload among individual workers.

Performance on problem-solving tasks could be evaluated on the basis of effective solutions delivered on time.

3. Routine Objectives

The MBO agreement may include some of the more significant routine objectives. These would cover the regular and recurring tasks which may be necessary, but which may contribute little to the upgrading of individual or organizational performance levels.

However, if some routine functions are not performed efficiently, this might impede progress toward achievement of problem-solving or innovative objectives. Routine tasks could include: (1) submitting routine financial or personnel reports, (2) attending weekly staff meetings, or (3) procuring office supplies and equipment. Performance is measured against such standards as: (1) submission of reports on time (and without receiving criticism for omissions or errors), (2) percentage of weekly meetings attended, (3) availability of common office supplies as needed, or (4) recruitment of qualified staff as required.

Today, any employee who is doing things in the same way they were done five years ago is probably already obsolete. Managers must take a close look at employees who spend most of their time on routine activities since they may be performing at a marginal level of productivity. If so, they could be prime targets for being transferred or released during the next personnel squeeze.

4. Professional Development Objectives

An MBO system should encompass both the organization's need to achieve program goals and the individual's need for professional growth and development. As John Humble points out: "At its best, management by objectives is a system that integrates the company's goals of profit and growth with the manager's [employee's] needs to contribute and to develop himself personally."[10]

In other words, if the organization expects employees to be productive and innovative, it should also be willing to help them update and/or improve their work-related knowledge and skills. Professional development objectives for the employee might include:

(1) Taking training courses (during or after work hours),

(2) Writing a professional paper and/or participating in a professional conference,

(3) Studying and reporting on a significant problem of interest to the organization,

(4) Teaching an inhouse or university course, or

(5) Taking temporary assignments outside which provide new knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

5. Organizational Development Objectives

Like people, organizations tend to get rigid or obsolete if they do not stay flexible and improve to keep abreast of changing external conditions. While some program innovation objectives may include changes in the organization, this is not always the case. In fact, some managers fail to achieve new program objectives because they have not deliberately addressed the needs or shortcomings of the existing organizational system. Communications may be faulty, so that people do not understand the new objectives being sought by the organization.

Similarly, internal procedures may be so cumbersome that innovative people become frustrated in trying to carry out their objectives. The organization may have become so bogged down in legal rules that it is more important to senior managers to be safe than to get anything done. Such an organizational climate is anathema to the employee risk-taking and experimentation needed to cope with a rapidly changing environment. Setting and achieving organizational development objectives should be basic and urgent tasks for managers at all levels and for other employees who are able to contribute.

Organizational development objectives are intended to help the organization or unit itself become more effective. Recent studies, such as Peters and Waterman's In Search of Excellence[11] and Kanter's The Change Masters[12], suggest that effective organizations are characterized by managements which:

(1) anticipate and prepare for changes in the external environment and

(2) create a positive organizational climate which encourages and rewards staff participation, risk-taking, and innovation.

Peters and Waterman report that effective organizations:

1. Pay attention to basic organizational values ("What do we stand for?").

2. Stay close to the people (clients, suppliers, employees and other "stakeholders").

3. Concentrate on important areas where they are competent (They stick to their knitting).

4. Recognize that productivity is achieved through people (not machines, procedures, or policies).

5. Encourage internal autonomy and entrepreneurship to stay innovative.

6. Maintain an action orientation (avoiding paralysis by analysis).

7. Keep the organizational structure simple and the staff lean (avoid excessive layering and clearances).

8. Maintain flexible control systems (Keep controls tight or loose as conditions require).

As a manager, you need to predict and track external political, legal, economic, cultural, or technical factors which can significantly affect your unit's ability to achieve its objectives. You can treat the larger organization(s) to which your unit belongs as part of your external environment, since it constrains or limits what you can do (through regulations, budget and staff allocations, etc). Consequently, the objectives you set for for your unit should be consistent with the broader goals of your office, bureau, etc. Ideally, close linkages should exist between top management's goals and the specific operational goals of work units at each lower level of the organization.

Under an MBO approach, your effectiveness as a manager is determined by the quality and relevance of your unit outputs. Your staff can be very busy with activities and still be ineffective unless these activities produce some desired impact outside of the organization. For example how much time and energy do we spend on internal processes which have little or no positive impact on our clients? Do administrative procedures and documentation detract from the more substantive aspects of implementing programs?

In short, the effectiveness of managers is the critical variable which makes the difference between an excellent organization and a mediocre one. Effective managers and supervisors are those who help their people to rise above a common preoccupation with routine activities to focus on solving problems and introducing innovations.

Following are some illustrative Organizational Development objectives:

(1) Assess current organizational leadership styles to see if they are consistent with the need to create a climate which encourages staff creativity and innovation. Introduce program to effect needed changes in styles. (Many experienced hands contend that we must start at the top and work down--or it won't work. You must decide whether this is true in your situation.)

(2) Improve the flow of communications throughout the organization--lateral, vertical, horizontal, etc.

(3) Clarify organizational goals, values, and performance standards so that employees know what the organization stands for.

(4) Strengthen linkages between organizational objectives and employee objectives.

(5) Revise reward and recognition systems to motivate people to contibute to current organizational innovation and problem-solving goals. Gear rewards to specific the performance achievement of individuals or groups, not to their senority or hierarchical status.

(6) Assign adequate resources to ensure that the organizational development objectives are achieved.

To sum up, the MBO agreement will contain a mixture of objectives, according to the particular employee's situation. It may be important to start with Innovation objectives and include one or more of these. Next, cover Problem-solving objectives. Then, include the more important Routine objectives (it is not necessary to include everything). Then, include some Professional Development or personal growth objectives for individuals. Finally, consider whether the concerned manager or employee should be assigned responsibility for achieving Organizational Development objectives. It is important to focus both supervisory and employee energies on improvement and innovation if the organization and the staff are to grow and progress. Figure 1 on Page 11a provides one possible format for an MBO plan. You will probably need to design a format which meets your particular needs.

Figure 1: Sample MBO Plan : Jane W. Jones,
Training Division, Office of Personnel

PERIOD COVERED: 5/1/87-4/30/88

MAJOR OBJECTIVES	PRIOR-ITY	PROGRESS MEASURES	TARGET DATES	REQUIRED RESOURCES
A. INNOVATION OBJECTIVES				
1. Complete scope of work RFTP for Middle Management Skills Course	1	Pass peer review. Accepted by Contracts	6/30/87 7/30/87	Access to word processor
2. Help monitor/modify first 3-4 Mid. Mgt. Skills Courses	1	Reports to Chief, Training 5 days after course:	12/2-7/87 2/24-3/1/88 4/7-12/88 5/5-10/88	Travel Funds Travel Funds Travel Funds Travel Funds
3. Prepare design and implementing proposal for Senior Mgt. Course (4 weeks)	2	Acceptance by Senior Mgt.	12/31/87	Endorsement of design phase by Chief Exe.
B. PROBLEM SOLVING OBJECTIVES:				
1. Convert student files to microcomputer files	3	25% done per quarter.	100% by 6/30/88	
2. Reduce errors on recording course grades from 7% to 3%	2	Feedback from record unit.	6/1/88	
3. [Continued]				
. ROUTINE OBJECTIVE				
. Represent unit at staff meetings	3	75% attendance	Weekly	
. Make progress reports to Chief, Personnel.	1	92% submitted on time	By 5th of each month	
. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES:				
. Complete AMA "Training of Trainers" Course	2	AMA grade report	By 3/15/88	Tuition funds

PROGRESS DISCUSSION DATES: First work day of each month

SIGNATURES: s/J. Jones s/G. Smith (Supervisor) 4/15/87

IV. Some Potential Pitfalls in Using MBO

A. Inadequate support for MBO by higher management

Unless the top management of your organization supports the system of managing by objectives, you may encounter problems in using it to lead your employees or to distribute staff rewards and recognition. However, many organizational regulations on employee evaluation do call for you (as a supervisor) to: (1) set performance objectives for each subordinate at the beginning of a rating period and (2) provide her/him with feedback on performance at regular intervals during the year. A good MBO system does this and more. While promotion decisions may be made by people other than the immediate supervisor or rater, clearly defined objectives and specific achievement-based evaluation reports can still influence these decisions.

B. Rapidly changing priorities can undermine an MBO agreement

Some employees are reluctant to plan ahead or set objectives and priorities because their superiors are constantly assigning new tasks. If your superiors cannot rise above constant fire-fighting or MBC (Management by Crisis), then you clearly have a problem. Nevertheless, MBO can sometimes be used as a tool for helping your boss get better organized. You may have to initiate your own MBO agreement with your boss (and probably his/her boss) before you and your staff can prepare MBO agreements. After agreement is reached on your priorities, this can be used as the basis for screening and accepting/rejecting new tasks. If a proposed new task is critical and cannot be accomodated under the present MBO plan, then it may be necessary to drop some less important objectives.

C. MBO generates too much paperwork

MBO is a tool for managing. MBO agreements and reports can be as detailed or as general as you need to get the job done. If the MBO system get bogs down in paperwork, you will need to review whether agreements contain too many objectives or too much description of what is to be done. As a supervisor, you must learn to KISS (KEEP IT SIMPLE, SUPER!).

V. Benefits of an Effective MBO System

A. MBO supports needed organizational innovation

As indicated above, the rapid rate of change in today's world makes it imperative that most organizations continuously innovate and improve their programs, people, and internal systems. MBO agreements provide a means for concentrating more staff effort and other resources on needed organizational innovations. The MBO system can be used to (1) help people set specific improvement targets and then (2) provide recognition and rewards for progress toward these targets.

96

B. MBO links higher level and lower level objectives

MBO can be used to establish a closer linkage between an individual's performance and organizational objectives and priorities. The overall goals and priorities are broken down into smaller, more manageable objectives for offices, projects, and individual staff members. People can see how their particular effort fits into the larger picture. Managers are also responsible for helping employees to maintain and improve their personal effectiveness. MBO agreements can thus include professional development objectives which help people to grow and better perform their jobs.

C. An MBO Agreement Clarifies Job Responsibilities

Studies of supervisors conducted by the University of Michigan and other institutions have commonly shown a disagreement of 30% or more among supervisors and subordinates as to the most important aspects of a given subordinate's job. The process in MBO of having an oral dialogue between a superior and subordinate and then reducing understandings to a written agreement clarifies mutual expectations about:

(1) work objectives, priorities, and target dates (what the subordinate is expected to achieve by when),

(2) criteria for measuring progress toward the objectives, and

(3) needed support or resources to be provided by the supervisor.

MBO has also been used to address the common complaint by employees that the supervisor did not clearly explain what was required at the beginning of a performance evaluation period, but then penalized the employee for not doing it.

To address the problem of unclear expectations, Odiorne notes the importance of dialogue and discussion in the MBO system:

> "The manager and subordinate sit down at the beginning of each period and talk until agreement upon job goals is achieved. During the period, the subordinate is given wide latitude in choice of method. At the end of the period, the results are jointly reviewed against agreed-upon goals and an assessment of the degree of success is made

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A dialogue on performance between the supervisor and subordinate should occur regularly throughout the rating period. The manager should not save up positive or negative feedback on a subordinate's performance until the end of the year when employee evaluation reports are due.

In a classic article on performance evaluation, Douglas McGregor described the importance of giving employees regular feedback on performance:

> "The annual or semi-annual appraisal is not a particularly effective stimulus to learning for another reason: It provides 'feedback' about behavior at a time remote from the behavior itself. People do learn and change as a result of feedback. In fact, it is the only way they learn. However, the most effective feedback occurs immediately after the behavior. The subordinate can learn a great deal from a mistake, or a particular failure in performance, provided it is analyzed while the evidence is immediately at hand. Three or four months later, the likelihood of effective learning from that experience is small. It will be still smaller if the superior's generalized criticism relates to several incidents spread over a period of months."14/

D. MBO can help make employee evaluations more objective

MBO stresses the importance of an individual's performance, rather than physical appearance or personality. An MBO system thus permits individual performance evaluations to be based on achievement of specific results, rather than on such extraneous factors as personal traits, political contacts, or physical attraction. Higher performance ratings should normally be given to the individuals who strive to innovate or improve operations. Lower ratings should be given to individuals who cannot or will not rise above with the routine or traditional way of doing business. In short, MBO should also reward the "grouch" who achieves his/her objectives and penalize the "personality kid" who talks a good game but never delivers the goods.

E. MBO provides more employee autonomy

Once the subordinate and superior have agreed to the objectives, the need for close supervision should be reduced. The subordinate knows what results are expected and is thus responsible for ensuring that daily activities lead to the stated objectives in the MBO plan. In other words, the subordinate can receive automatic and continuous self-feedback on personal performance by comparing actual daily or weekly results against his/her objectives. This approach assumes that the subordinate is able and willing to assume responsibility for his/her performance and to accept the consequences of poor performance.

However, the superior must be willing to give the employee adequate flexibility and freedom to achieve results within the constraints agreed to. This supervisory style may be more suitable for experienced and highly motivated employees, but less appropriate for employees with limited experience or self-confidence. The new or uncertain employee may thus need closer direction and guidance from the supervisor. In short, the levels of supervision and employee autonomy must fit the particular situation.

VI. A Closing Note

The manager is the key to achieving greater organizational effectiveness. Consequently, he/she must be able to focus staff and other resources on the most important tasks to be done, especially the task of promoting continuous improvement and innovation in operations, people, and structures. MBO is one tool which the supervisor or manager can use to better focus staff energies on priority goals and key results areas. Like any tool, MBO must be used only in appropriate situations. For example, MBO should be quite valuable where managers want to provide experienced employees with considerable autonomy to work on specific tasks which increase organizational productivity and innovation. Thus, the MBO agreement could cover expected outputs and objectives, but the employee is given freedom to select the best means for achieving these and for staying on schedule. If the MBO agreement is properly prepared, the employee is also able to continuously measure his/her own performance by comparing daily progress against agreed-on objectives.

However, while supervisors should give considerable freedom of operation to employees, they must still be concerned with providing appropriate administrative support and positive encouragement. In the case of less experienced employees, supervisors may have to be more actively involved in implementation so that they can use situational issues and problems as a means of coaching and teaching. Finally, all supervisors must be sensitive to changing external or internal conditions which may require revision of MBO agreements. The MBO system must be flexible enough to match the particular times and circumstances of the people involved.

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NOTES:

1/ George S. Odiorne, MBO II: A System of Managerial Leadership for the 80's, (Fearon Pitman Publishers, Inc., Belmont, California, 1979), pages 2-3, 52, 77.

2/ Karl Albrecht, Successful Management by Objectives (Prentice-Hall, A Spectrum Book, 1979), page 20.

3/ ibid., page 21.

4/ Peter Drucker, The Effective Executive (Harper and Row, New York, 1967. Also available in paperback).

5/ Rensis Likert, New Patterns of Management (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1961). More recent views on Likert's linking-pin and other management theories are described in Rensis Likert and Jane Gibson Likert, New Ways of Managing Conflict (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1976).

6/ John H. Humble, How to Manage by Objectives, (AMACOM, American Management Associations, New York, 1973, Later edition now available?), pages 4-10. Theory Y and its opposite, Theory X, were made famous by the late Douglas McGregor. See his The Human Side of Enterprise (McGraw-Hill, 1960. Theory Y is often labeled as "democratic" management while Theory X is "autocratic." Classifying management styles into only these two extreme categories has been criticized as an oversimplification of reality.

7/ These and other characteristics of an effective objective are discussed in William C. Giegold, Management by Objectives: A Self-Instructional Approach, Vol. III, (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1978), pages 16-20.

8/ Odiorne, MBO II, pages 153, 302

9/ The idea of defining a problem as a deviation from a performance standard came from Charles H. Kepner and Benjamin B. Tregoe, The Rational Manager (McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965 - Later edition now available).

10/ Humble, op. cit.

11/ Thomas J. Peters and Robert H. Waterman, Jr., In Search of Excellence: Lessons from America's Best-Run Companies (Harper and Row, New York, 1982. Also available in paperback.).

12/ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, The Change Masters: Innovation for Productivity in the American Corporation (Simon and Shuster, New York, 1983. Also available in paperback.). See also her article, "The Middle Manager as Innovator," Harvard Business Review, July-August 1982 (a Harvard videotape is also available as a companion piece).

13/ Odiorne, op. cit.,

14/ Reprinted in Douglas McGregor, The Human Side of Enterprise, (McGraw-Hill, 1960), page 87.

Chapter 3

Performance Planning

"If I had only known," Jake Barnes said to his wife the evening after his performance appraisal. Jake's appraisal had not been what he expected. When he went to meet with his boss to review his first year as bank branch manager, he felt satisfied with the job he had done. Things were under control. Turnover was down; his schedule for part-time tellers had substantially reduced the length of the rush hour line; with schedules organized, he had time to work with customers and solve problems.

Then at his appraisal interview he learned what his boss thought. She was happy with the new organization and praised Jake's skill in working with people. Everything he was proud of she admired—then came the "buts": He hadn't given high enough priority to marketing, his branch had one of the lowest increases in deposits in the region, his reports to her had been sparse, and he hadn't contributed enough at regional branch manager meetings. All this added up to an average rating for Jake. But Jake's problem was not that he didn't want to do what was required. Nor was it that he couldn't do it. It was that nobody ever told him what was required.

Studies show that only about one-fourth of all employees know what they will be evaluated on before the evaluation takes place. If they are going to respond positively to appraisals, employees need to know what yardstick is being used to measure them. Telling them what was right or wrong after the fact seems careless or, even worse, manipulative. You are told the rules after you've lost the game. *No fair.*

There is a lot of talk about making performance appraisal objective. This is a goal worth pursuing and many improvements have been made in that direction. For many jobs, however, total objectivity seems far-fetched. How do you objectively measure the output of cancer researchers? Do you count the number of journal articles they publish? On the other hand, most jobs can be defined well enough that the criteria for judging performance can be stated clearly, even if the per-

Taken from: Performance, Planning & Appraisal, Patricia King, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1984, pages 20-44.

102

formance cannot be measured objectively. The first step to really fair, believable performance appraisal is to define the job and the criteria by which we will judge performance.

Organizations as well as individuals will benefit from planning work more carefully and defining what is meant by good performance —not just making performance appraisal more reliable, but deciding what we really mean by productivity increase. Vague criteria not only harm employees, they hurt company performance. Some people don't contribute what they should because we haven't defined carefully what's needed; we can tell them about it after the fact, but the firm's dollars will have already been paid out for below standard performance.

As you will see when we discuss the legal aspects of performance appraisal, courts have challenged the lack of specific, valid criteria for making personnel decisions. To satisfy the need for validity, appraisal must be based on job-related criteria. Planning is the first step in developing such criteria. These legal requirements also make good business sense since having valid criteria means there is less room for error in managerial judgments. This increased accuracy should lead to better decisions as well as to more useful and believable feedback for employees.

At today's pace jobs are likely to change frequently. We can no longer tell a new employee, "Here are your duties," and go for several years without redefining the job. To keep pace with technology, gain productivity, and remain competitive, we have to redefine expectations from time to time. Performance planning affords us a systematic way of reviewing the viability of jobs and making adjustments before we fall too far behind.

More and more organizations emphasize planning, so even if we don't plan now, our managements are likely to demand it of us in the future. For you, the "future" may be now. You may already have to write plans for yourself and your people. You may moan, but think of the benefits:

- When we discuss goals with employees and they agree to meet them, those agreements become promises. Most people try harder if they've promised something.
- There will be fewer mistakes because employees will be given proper direction.
- We will have taken the time to think through what resources employees need to get the job done.

103

Basing performance appraisal on a plan, we turn appraisal into a process rather than an event. This process differs from old-fashioned rating systems most obviously in the amount of communication it requires between boss and subordinate. There is also room in the plan for personal goals as well as for work objectives and performance improvements. At performance planning time the manager and employee discuss and agree on the goals, duties, and standards for the employee's performance and set objectives for the work period.

How to Make a Performance Plan

According to the textbooks the first part of planning is to make the plans of the individual mesh with the plans of the company. Here's how it's supposed to work: Top management makes a plan for the organization, setting the direction of the company and deciding specific goals for the next period. Strategic plans are usually drawn up on a five-year-basis, and annual plans are based on the strategic plan. These plans are supposed to be specific and to ensure the prosperity of the company. Sometimes they actually do; sometimes they are poorly drawn and not very useful; sometimes they don't exist.

If your company is one that plans carefully, you probably have a corporate plan, a division plan, or the like. About 80 percent of the nation's largest corporations do set objectives, but the goals that these companies set are often financial and don't describe what is to be achieved to realize those financial goals. This goal setting is left up to department heads and managers, who sometimes complain about doing the planning. But it is their job. Every textbook says that managers plan, lead, organize, and control.

Goal setting as an organizationwide activity is also taking hold in many smaller firms and government agencies. Schools, hospitals and other organizations are beginning to see the virtues of careful planning. Chances are, then, that you will have some overall plan to use as the basis for your own group's plan. Needless to say, before you plan for or with your subordinates, you have to plan for yourself. If your organization doesn't plan formally, you may take an opportunity to ask your boss to work with you on your group's overall plan, pushing a little management development up the line as it were.

There is no plan unless it's written down. Unwritten plans, even if they are discussed, are amorphous and vague. Six or twelve months later people can't remember what they agreed to do, or they find out

too late that they had different interpretations of what they committed themselves to do. So your first step is to write a plan for your group. Working with your boss, if possible, integrate your plan with the plans of the organization. You may want to get your own employees involved, perhaps in a group meeting. (How to do a thorough job of corporate planning is a subject for another book. The real subject here is planning the work of your subordinates.)

Once you have a plan for your group, you will use it as the basis for the individual's plan. Each employee will contribute to certain of the overall objectives. Some objectives will "belong" to only one employee. You begin an individual's plan by deciding which of the group's objectives the employee will work on.

I am about to suggest (very strongly) that you get your employees involved in planning their own work. But first some words of caution concerning your style as a manager. If your managerial style is more traditional, if you are more likely to make the decisions yourself, to tell people what's needed, and not to ask their opinions, then suddenly asking them to participate in planning may come as a shock. It may even make them suspicious of your intentions. If this is your style, you have two choices: one is to do most of the planning yourself; the other is, of course, to change your style.

If you do most of the planning yourself, your employees will be much less likely to accept enthusiastically your goals for them. You will also miss out on the value of their thinking and experience. But you will still benefit from having a written plan. They will understand clearly what is expected of them, they will spend their time working on what you think is important, and you will have criteria by which to judge their performance at appraisal time.

If you decide to change your style, you won't be able to do that overnight. But you can use the performance planning and appraisal process to begin to interact more with your employees, to show that you respect their knowledge and ideas. If you make a gradual transition to a different style of management, you may reap bonus benefits of more harmony and dedication on the part of your people.

Getting Your Employees Involved

To set realistic goals, it is essential that you get your employees involved, that you sit down with each person to concentrate on individual contribution. Experienced employees will be able to do this practically without guidance. Newer employees will need more input from you to

formulate realistic goals and objectives. In either case it is better to plan with the employee. If you say, "Here's the job and here's how to do it," your employee will salute and say, "Yes." But that "yes" may not mean enthusiastic commitment. If you encourage open discussion, if you show you respect the person's intelligence and creativity, you are more likely to get cooperation. An employee who is involved will be less likely to feel resentful of work assigned, to see it as a punishment for past failures, or to feel singled out for extra work.

If you get the employee involved, you are more likely to base the plan on real job conditions. In the day-to-day crush it is easy to miss the small changes that take place in lead times or the capabilities of people in other departments who must contribute to the effort.

This employee involvement does not mean you forfeit your responsibility for planning and controlling the work of your group. Even though the employee may come up with the bulk of the objectives, may be able to plan the activities needed to achieve the goals, may correctly set priorities, and may even write up the plan, your role as a manager will be to guide the process and to approve the final result. Managers who lack confidence sometimes feel uncomfortable with this, preferring to be more directive, but as you develop your skill in managing, you will feel more comfortable sharing these tasks.

Once you get the employee involved, you must make sure that the person is prepared to do a good job of planning. It makes no sense to ask for opinions if the employee has no information on which to base an opinion. When you set up the planning meeting, give your employee as much information as is practical—goals and objectives set by management above your level, the job description, information about coming business conditions, new products or services coming down the line, budgets, and so forth. Later in this chapter you will get a checklist of information to cover.

When you meet with your employee keep the discussion open. Don't try to structure it too much. You want to foster creativity on both sides. Many managers and groups find a brainstorming session is useful to elicit ideas about goals and how to accomplish them. Learn this technique. Remember that the key issue in fostering creativity is to suspend critical judgment and to keep asking for more ideas; then sort out the usable from the impractical. Use the checklists at the end of this chapter to judge whether a goal should be accepted, then go on to identify when it should be done and what resources are needed.

At the end of the meeting either you or your employee will write up

the plan. The written document will confirm what both of you have agreed to do. Accepting the written agreement will be an outward sign of your mutual commitment to the goals, objectives, and timetables.

The Need for Specificity

Vague statements about what will be achieved are not goals or objectives. They are just vague statements. A manager of a supermarket may think improving customer relations is a good goal, but it is only a place to start the planning. Once she knows that that's the general direction, the real objective setting begins. What does it mean to improve customer relations? Does she want to reduce the number of customer complaints to no more than ten a week? Does she want to reduce waiting time on line to no more than 15 minutes at peak hours? If she tells her assistant managers to improve customer relations and leaves it at that, there will be trouble.

When discussing this subject in management training programs, I frequently play this game: I write on the chart paper, "Considerable progress will be made on the XYZ project in the next month." I ask one participant to play the role of the subordinate and one to play the role of the manager. Both secretly write the percentage of the project they think will be completed. Then they show what they have written to the group. To the "worker," "considerable progress" usually means about 15 percent, sometimes as high as 25 percent, but to the "boss" it's never less than 50 percent and usually about 80 or 90 percent. The gap between these expectations may be the source of later problems, not only with performance appraisal but with accomplishing work that must be done.

Let's return to the example of the supermarket for an illustration of what might happen. If on hearing that the manager wants to improve customer relations, the assistant manager starts to spend considerable amounts of time greeting and being friendly with customers, he may have less time for training cashiers or making an efficient restocking schedule. Customer complaints about items missing from the shelves might increase and waiting time at rush hour might also increase. The subordinate will have spent time trying to meet his boss's objective, but the boss will see the situation deteriorating instead of improving.

Vague goals are practically useless. A good goal is specific, measurable, has a time limit, is realistic and challenging. A good performance plan contains such goals supported by action plans (the steps to be taken

101

to achieve the goal) and a milestone chart (a list of interim deadlines and dates for follow-up meetings, and so on). The plan may even spell out exactly what authority the subordinate has to carry out the goal, what decisions the employee can make, how much money and other resources are available. The more complete the plan, the more likely it is to be achieved. And remember, if you don't write down the plan, it doesn't exist.

The Elements of a Good Plan

Let's go through each of the elements of a good plan.

Specific

This means the objective will state the work to be accomplished in terms that the boss and subordinate can *both* understand. When absolute specificity is impossible, you can at least set a range to guide your actions—between 10 and 15 percent, under $25,000, and so forth. Sometimes you will have to be arbitrarily specific. Guessing is okay if you can't do any better. As you work toward the goal, you will gain greater accuracy for the next time. If you have been vague, you won't learn as much.

Measurable

This means that the goal is quantified in some way. If you can write a goal that can be measured, you should. Many jobs lend themselves to this kind of scrutiny, but some don't, notably managerial and research work. In some instances, you may have to give up this criterion. But don't give it up too easily. Many managers find it difficult to write measurable goals because they haven't measured their group's performance. They can't say how many customer complaints a week would be an improvement, because they don't know how many they get now. It's something to think about. If measures depend on conditions, include the conditions as part of your plan. Then you can test your assumptions later on.

Time Limited

"Measurable" may be difficult to explain but "time limited" is easy. Put a time limit on every goal. Without a time limit a goal is a wish or a

fantasy. "Someday" is what people say—"Someday we'll get the northwest region better organized," or "Someday I'm going to learn to give a decent speech," or "Someday my prince will come." If you put a date on it you're halfway to making it a goal.

Realistic

Some people tend to set goals beyond their reach. Your employees may do this because they want to impress you or because they don't have a realistic sense of their own limitations or the limitations of the job. You have to be careful of wishful thinking too. In an effort to get the most out of their employees, some managers set goals that are just too much for their people to handle; some managers even think this is a good idea. They feel it maximizes effort. It doesn't. Most people, when faced with a clearly unattainable goal, get discouraged and depressed and don't try at all. When it comes to goals, there's a buzz word for realistic: "doable," and it's a good one.

Challenging

We want realistic goals, but they shouldn't be too easy. "Ho hum" work doesn't excite people. Some managers and employees are tempted to set only easy goals so they will never have to admit that they didn't achieve them. This is true especially when they know they will have to file the plan with the boss's boss or the personnel department, when later decisions will be made on the basis of whether the goals are achieved, and especially when people might get fired for not meeting standards. But it is important for us to challenge ourselves and our subordinates. The "stretch" in the goal is essential if we want our people to reach new heights. Achieving a challenging goal is one of the most satisfying things a human being can do. This is real job satisfaction. If you are afraid someone else will punish your people for not achieving challenging goals, don't show your plan to anyone outside your own group.

Challenging goals are frequently the least easily defined. Often they are challenging because they break new ground, but for that very reason it is often difficult to make them specific and measurable. Especially in work like research, the truly innovative work is often the hardest to describe thoroughly ahead of time and the most difficult to evaluate. Unless we balance specificity and realism with real challenge and innovations, we will stagnate.

The better you understand your people, the better you will be able to guide them to the right balance between realistic and challenging goals. New employees, those who have had recent failures, or those who lack confidence should start with a little less challenge. Later they can build confidence from their successes and take on more. Confident, experienced people should be given their "wings." (Perhaps with a manager's safety net to make sure that no disaster occurs.)

Working Out the Plan

With these criteria as a background, let's turn our attention to actually drawing up the plan. Here are the action steps:

1. Begin with corporate or department goals.
2. Look at the employee's job.
3. Look at the employee's strengths and limits.
4. Consider the environment in which the employee will work.
5. Consider what managerial support the employee will need.
6. Draw up action plans.

Throughout this process your bywords will be to *set your people up to succeed.* If they do, you will too. So you will start with broad areas and limit them to what is manageable but still challenging, always keeping an eye on the priorities, making sure that you devote yourself to work that has a real payoff for the organization. Avoid the routine busywork that doesn't profit the company or the department in any substantial way.

I am going to describe these procedures, assuming that unless you have a good reason to leave your employee out of the process you will be doing these steps together.

Examine the goals of the organization. Imagine ways your employee can contribute directly to those goals. For instance, if the corporate goal is to increase sales by 17 percent, a district sales manager might have as a goal to increase sales in the territory by a like amount.

Another area to explore is how the employee can contribute indirectly to the organization's goals. Projects that improve administrative efficiency fall under this category. For instance, as a contribution to the sales increase goal, a computer systems analyst may cut down the firm's order processing time by two days. This doesn't directly increase sales, but faster order processing may give the firm a competitive edge and therefore indirectly affect sales.

Next take a look at the employee's job itself. Use the job description or last year's objectives and plan the ongoing or routine work that must be accomplished. The temptation will be to do this first and look at the organizational goals later on with the notion that we really ask ourselves, "After completing the routine work, what special projects can this employee undertake?" The fact is that the routine work may not be critical to the realization of the organization's goals. Concentrating on routine work involves us in the bureaucratic insanity found in so many places (where the clerk is filling out a request to have a light bulb changed, and the customers are walking out of the store because of the lack of attention). Current needs must take precedence over things we've always done and haven't recently evaluated.

The list of objectives or duties should be long and inclusive. Up to this point, you need to write down anything you can think of without regard to how possible it is. In other words, you brainstorm first. Then go over the list and assign priorities based on the value of the activities. I use the simple A-B-C method: Mark essential work A, important but not essential work B, and relatively unimportant work C. These designations will be useful as you begin to prune the list because of time, resource, and skill restraints. When you make tradeoffs, you will want to eliminate the C work first. In trying for the best plan, start from a broad range of options, then cut back.

Now you need to consider the capabilities of the employee. If the person is experienced and capable, you will have no trouble with this. Skilled and capable people can usually do it for themselves. New people need more guidance. Here the axiom about setting your employees up to succeed becomes essential. In considering the capabilities of new people, rely heavily on what they did on their previous jobs. Limit the amount of work, but don't give them busywork. The first days on a new job are times of high motivation for people. You cannot create that kind of motivation, but you can destroy it by not putting it to good use. The new employee still needs to have a little stretch. Make the objectives shorter term. People who have had recent failures also need the same kind of special consideration. Concentrate on the employee's strengths in choosing among the possible objectives.

For each objective, ask what new skills and knowledge a person would need to perform the work and compare these needs with what skills and knowledge the employee has or can develop either on the job as the work progresses or through training. The skills can be technical, communicational, analytical—anything down to how to operate a new piece of equipment. Filling in gaps in knowledge or skill can become

part of the employee's personal growth objectives. If the gap is too broad to be filled readily, you may have to modify the objectives or assign them to someone else. Filling the gap may also lead to things for your own "to-do" list: work you will have to do because the employee cannot or, more likely, coaching to help the employee learn to do the work.

When you consider your employee's capabilities, don't let your own attitudes get too much in the way. Managers and supervisors are often susceptible to psychological projection. If they are confident, they can be overly optimistic about what their people can do or how confident their people are. The opposite is also true. Timid managers may be overly cautious in evaluating the capabilities of their people. In avoiding risks of failure, they pass up opportunities for real success.

The balance here is tricky. It's like teaching a kid to ride a bike. If you let go too soon, the kid will fall and perhaps get hurt. If you hold on too tight, the kid will never learn to ride the bike. If there is no risk, there is no real gain.

Next, consider the environment in which the employee will work. Projects may fail (and so may people) not only because of internal failings but also because of external problems. Support systems may not function as they should and this will mean failure because of things outside your employee's control. So once you have a tentative set of objectives with priorities, you have to start to think about what the employee needs to do the work. There will be certain things that you will have to make sure the employee has: money, staff, equipment. These are normally part of the budgeting process, and most managers don't have any trouble thinking about them. One thing they do often forget though is the issue of authority to match the responsibility. The people who complain most often that they don't have enough authority are first-line supervisors. Without sufficient leeway in making and executing decisions, employees cannot perform to their fullest. Anticipate what spending or decision-making authority your employee needs and write it into the plan. If an employee is not ready to accept the authority, if you don't trust an employee's judgment on certain points, then neither is the person ready to take responsibility for the work. You can either give the person the training needed to accept the authority, or you can retain responsibility for the work. If you hang on to all the authority, it's not fair to hold the employee responsible.

Another factor to consider is: What support from others will the person need, either within or outside your group? If such support is

needed you may have to arrange for your employee to get full cooperation. Sometimes this means you have to inform other employees of the requirement (make it part of their objectives); you may have to negotiate with other managers for the support your employee needs. Consider the knowledge and skills of those who will support your employee's work. If there are deficiencies, you will have to either get them corrected (when members of your own staff are involved) or adjust your idea of what's possible (when the knowledge and skill gaps lie outside your area of control).

Consider the political climate in which your employee will be working. Will everyone be cooperative? Are there sensitive issues? Are those whose cooperation is needed likely to be generous with their help or will they hold back because they see themselves in competition with the person who needs their aid? Again, your employee may need special preparation to deal with the political realities or you may need to lower your expectations because of the political climate.

Next think through any changes that may affect the work. You may need contingency plans for likely changes. Consider all the possible obstacles, but don't overdo it, especially with new people. You want them to be realistic about the path they take; you don't want the future to look too full of quicksand and alligators. They'll decide not to go.

One Last Look

Now you need to go over the whole plan once more to make sure that it meets the criteria set at the beginning. Is it specific, are the outcomes measurable (if that is possible), do you have time limits set, and is the amount of work you have planned possible in the time allotted? Are the goals realistic and still challenging? Most of all, is the job meaningful for the organization and for the employee?

At this point you are making one last check. This is important, but don't do it with a fine-tooth comb. Especially if your employee has had a substantial role in formulating the plan, you don't want to get so picky that you give the impression that you disapprove. A good craftsman knows when to call the job done.

This last overview should include contingency planning. Consider the possible ill effects of succeeding, the possible downstream effects of the work. This is especially true for project work where your employee is instituting change. Say what you will do to avoid, prevent, or compensate for these ill effects.

Next make up your own plan based on the support you will be giving your employee. Plan for interim meetings to go over progress. Some managers like to do this at regular intervals, say monthly or quarterly. Some review when a milestone has been reached. Some ask for written reports which they then discuss. We will cover the subject of these interim meetings more thoroughly in the next chapter.

When you arrange for distribution of reports, be sure that your employees will receive directly any reports that deal with their work. Workers on the line should receive productivity and reject reports. All too often reports go only to managers. You need to know how your people are doing but so do the people themselves.

The last step of the planning is to draw up action plans. Here is where you will certainly want your employee to be involved. For each objective you will want a schedule of things the person will do to reach the goal. The result of the six steps to the planning process will be a written document that will guide your employee and later be the basis of the performance appraisal. You will eventually appraise how well your employee carried out the plan.

Setting Performance Improvement and Personal Growth Goals

Part of any employee's action plan should be some personal development. These objectives can be improvement of some skill or work habit, or they can be preparation for a next career step. Here it is best for you to guide, but not dictate to, the person. If there is a problem with the employee's performance, you might want to suggest a solution as a personal growth goal. The best way to begin is to point out the issue. Be careful not to make your remark sound like an attack; state the issue in work-related terms and in the most positive way. You can say, "Bob, you are lazy and are squandering your talent. You'd better start making better use of your time if you hope to get ahead around here." Or you can say, "Bob, I think it's time you started reaping the full benefit of your talents. I know there is more you can contribute. Perhaps there is a way we can help you make better use of your time." The second approach may not work every time, but the first one is almost guaranteed to draw a defensive response.

One way to handle personal growth objectives is to build them into the regular work plan; perhaps this is the best way. In other words, you and your employee set a work goal that will accomplish a task

that needs doing, but will also give the employee the opportunity to develop some knowledge or skill. For instance, if you have a person who is reluctant to speak up at meetings and this is blocking future career steps or causing problems with the work, you can make sure the person has a project that requires reporting at meetings and give the person some training or counseling to overcome the problem.

Limit the number of performance improvement goals. You don't want people to spend most of their time on performance improvement instead of accomplishing the work. And no one can make a great many changes or learn several new skills all at once.

Make performance improvement goals changes in behavior—not changes in personality. Employers have no right to tell a person what kind of personality to have. Besides, changing someone's personality is not an easy thing. Some trained psychotherapists say it is impossible. If you have ever tried to change any aspect of your own personality, you know what this means. And you know it never works when other people decide you should change.

Changing behavior that is related to actual job requirements is a different matter. Such a change is a possible and legitimate performance improvement goal. You may not be able to force an earthy person to try to be elegant, but you can stop a manager from making romantic overtures to the staff.

When it comes to helping the employee prepare for future career steps, act cautiously. There are two possible pitfalls. One is that your encouragement will seem like a promise of a promotion. The other is that you will wind up making the person's career decisions. Encourage the employee to set goals—long-range and short-range—but also encourage the person to keep career options open. It's good to have goals, but if they are too rigid, the employee can become locked into one idea and not be able to recognize and take advantage of unforeseen opportunities.

Thinking about career goals is hard when things are not going well. If the employee has not been performing well, you really can't bring yourself to discuss career steps. It may be, however, that if you suggest performance improvement goals in the context of the person's present job and as a prerequisite for advancement, you may turn on motivation that had been dormant.

It is also difficult to discuss advancement when the organization is not doing well. If the present situation is bad, we tend to think there will

be no career opportunities soon. But our employees still need goals and future rewards for good performance. As the "baby-boom" babies hit their career stride, we will see an increase in competition for middle and top management positions. At this writing, it looks as if we will never be able to deliver on the implied promise of an upwardly mobile career for everyone. We will have to learn ways to challenge people even if we cannot give them a promotion every couple of years or an express ticket to the executive suite. We also need to develop ways of rewarding people apart from the normal big raise or big promotion syndrome.

Developing Standards of Performance

Once you and your employee have committed to specific, measurable goals that are within the employee's capabilities, turn your attention to standards of performance. This is really your job and your decision. Some managers involve their employees in discussing what those measures will be, but it is up to you, the boss, to make the final decision. Certainly, if you get your employees' opinions on this, you will have the benefit of their thinking on a topic they really know quite a bit about. And they are more likely to regard standards developed with their input as fair.

Developing performance standards is where managers who want to "get tough" can do so. High standards, provided they are fair and applied equally to all, actually seem to be the best. As is possible with putting some challenge in the work plan, we can bring out the motivation of our people by challenging them to meet high standards.

For some work, it is easy to set measures of performance. If you are managing a production line that makes alarm clocks, you can use the reject rate as a measure of performance. You can set a range: x number of rejects is unacceptable, y is average, z is good, and so on. This sort of thing is much more difficult with staff work and may be impossible with managerial work. Some people go too far trying to measure performance and lose sight of the mission of their group. As a training consultant I have seen management and professional development departments in large corporations measure their performance by the number of "person-days" of training. In other words, they get "points" for the amount of time the employees spend in training sessions without regard to the quality of the sessions. Does the fact that a manager sits in a conference room for three days at a program on presentation skills necessarily mean that his next speech will be a better one? Not accord-

ing to me. There are useful measures of performance for most jobs. We have to make sure we don't adopt the facile ones just to save the time it would take to develop the more useful ones.

For managerial and professional employees you may have to develop a combination of objective measures of performance (like turnover rate or number of court cases argued) and some subjective standards. If you are going to subjectively evaluate your employee's performance, that is, base an evaluation on how you *feel* things are going, then you should describe as clearly as possible what you like and dislike, what you will observe, and how you are likely to react to these observations. This is not ideal, of course, but when more objective measures are impossible, this may be the only way. As long as your measures or way of judging performance are not mysterious, as long as you bring them out in the open, you should be able to maintain an atmosphere of fairness and cooperation.

If you are going to claim to pay employees for performance, you will have to find some way of relating your measures of performance to salary. Some organizations do this directly by having a system (either numerical or some other type) that dictates percentage of raise. For instance, some companies that use a management by objective (MBO) system relate salary to the meeting of objectives. Here is a basic continuum:

- Exceeds Most
- Exceeds Some
- Meets All
- Meets Most
- Meets Some

The basic rating, Meets All, means a person has met all the performance objectives; it corresponds to an average rating. It is impossible to get a higher rating unless the person's performance is at least at this level. Those who do not are rated Meets Most or Meets Some. (These ratings are considered okay if a person is new, the job has recently changed drastically, or there are other mitigating circumstances. But employees cannot get these ratings more than once without jeopardizing their positions.) Above the Meets All category are Exceeds Some and Exceeds Most. Of course, it's also possible for an extraordinary person to exceed all objectives or to meet no objectives. The former hardly ever happens if the objectives are set with the proper amount of stretch; promotions or extraordinary raises may be given in such cases. The latter, the Meets None performer, may be on the

way out. Certainly, the manager would need to take serious steps to correct the problem—either the person is in the wrong job, the planning was entirely inept, or the employee has some serious personal problem.

Some organizations use a 1 to 5 rating scale. If your organization does, it is best to explain to your employees how you will arrive at the rating based on whether they meet or exceed the performance plan.

Whatever the overall rating system will be (if one must be arrived at), *make sure your employees know what it is.* You may sabotage all your efforts at productive performance planning and appraisal if a connection between performance and salary increase is promised but not there.

How Often to Plan

How often you will go through the planning, appraisal, and replanning cycle will depend on the nature of the employee's work, the amount of experience the person has, how confident the employee is, and whether the person's performance has been bad, good, or indifferent. Most managers work through the cycle at least once a year, but you may have to do it more frequently for some people.

A person who is working on projects of relatively short duration or one who works in an area where it is hard to predict even near-future demands will need to have appraisal and replanning more frequently, perhaps once a calendar quarter until things settle down. (Of course, you would not take salary action so frequently. We are talking here about planning and sticking to our guns about where the emphasis needs to be—on planning and control rather than on administration.)

A new person, especially one new to the company, will need more frequent planning sessions and more frequent interim follow-up. More experienced people will still need attention, but not as frequently.

A person who lacks confidence will need more frequent planning and follow-up sessions. This is sometimes a function of the person being new on the job, or a need for more support and encouragement may be just a part of the person's personality.

Employees whose work has not been satisfactory will also need frequent planning and counseling. If you are trying to improve the person's performance you may want to plan and review as often as once a month until the person is on track. More about this later when we discuss performance problems. Again, don't forget to give attention to your average and high performers as well.

In deciding how often to plan and review work, consider any special temporary needs your employee might have. For instance, when the work situation is pressured because of some problem outside the employee's control—unusually high volume, new methods or systems being installed, or complex technical problems—the extra support gained from frequent planning and review will be very helpful. Unusual pressures outside of work also make a difference. Family problems and health problems may mean your support is needed to see the employee through.

Regardless of what company policy may say about how frequently salaries are reviewed, you will want to gear the timing of your planning and performance appraisals to the needs of your people and your operation.

Your Attitude

Whether or not your employees are enthusiastic about the plan you make together will depend on many things, not the least of which is your own attitude toward the work. When you, as a manager, are energetic and positive, when you project an image of commitment and diligence, that enthusiasm can be contagious. Your people will see you not only as their manager but as one whose attitudes and actions have been rewarded by the organization. What they see you do, the image you project, will seem to them to be what is required. If you work hard, if you are enthusiastic, if you create an atmosphere of fairness and commitment, if you seem to enjoy your work and care whether they enjoy theirs, they will respond with their own enthusiasm and commitment.

There isn't much else to say on this issue, but please don't believe that because it doesn't take up too much space it isn't very important. It is critical. You may do everything by this and every other book and still get it all wrong. If you can't show enthusiasm because you don't feel it for your own job, learn what's wrong and deal with it. If you just don't like management, go into another field. A chemist who doesn't like being a chemist affects only herself. A manager who is indifferent drains energy from the entire group.

Potential Problems

In thinking about undertaking any activity it's best to know where the pitfalls are. With performance planning and appraisal there are many.

The major one for planning is that there is a tendency to avoid it altogether. There are a great many excuses for not planning. People who avoid planning also find it very convenient to avoid appraising. And if they haven't planned I don't blame them for not appraising. Without a plan to use as a yardstick, it isn't possible to appraise performance. As my friend Rick Piper once described it, that game is, "Shoot the gun first; then we'll hold up the target." Without planning, appraisal degenerates into character assessment, which makes most managers nervous and most employees defensive. The issue is that we must plan, but we often avoid doing it. Why? For a ton of reasons.

First of all, the planning and appraisal cycle is usually an idea introduced by the personnel department. Regardless of its level of competency, personnel (or, as it is now widely known, human resources) is not a function that always commands a great deal of respect in an organization. If performance planning and appraisal is seen as "just another personnel department program," managers and employees may prejudge it as being useless and not bother to try it.

People also avoid planning because they prefer to avoid the commitment it implies. If you write a plan, you feel you have to stick to it, and any aimless wandering around has to stop. I guess planning is not for lazy people. But I also believe that most people are not lazy. They work hard. Frequently their accomplishments are paltry compared with their efforts, and they feel frustrated. Planning can help solve this problem and make you feel more satisfied with your work. By planning we also make sure our organizations get their money's worth. We may pay people more than they are worth to us, and they may feel they are paid too little. At this writing, the American business community is screaming its head off about productivity, but individual managers still seem reluctant to define what productivity means.

Those definitions, I must admit, can become political footballs. If you write a plan, it can be scrutinized; your boss can disagree with it or accept it as a promise to accomplish everything you wrote down. Since a first attempt at planning isn't likely to be all that accurate, you may feel a little apprehensive about doing it if your boss is likely to be harsh when it comes to evaluating the plan. But don't give up on planning. Make a plan, and if the political climate in your organization doesn't foster the idea, just don't show it to anybody.

Another pitfall is to make plans that are so vague as to be useless. This may also be the result of the political atmosphere. If a plan is required but the organization somehow makes us fear planning, we may write a plan that is so vague it means nothing. If you're going to do that and

call it planning, you might as well not bother. It's just a waste of time.

Some managers don't go far enough; others go too far. They push their people to agree to unrealistic goals. Or they themselves believe that more can be accomplished than is possible. This is a problem particularly for very ambitious managers. They want more from their people than their people are willing or able to give. They confuse leadership and challenge with coercion.

Managers who are themselves extraordinarily talented may make the mistake of setting unrealistic goals. First-line supervisors who have recently done their subordinates' job use what they perceive to have been their own level of performance as the standard for the work of their subordinates. This is dangerous for two reasons. First of all, the supervisor's level of contribution may have been extraordinary, beyond the reach of the average worker. Second, and perhaps more likely, the supervisor may not remember correctly what it was like to do the job, may not have an objective perception of what his own performance was like, or the conditions may have changed enough to make the job substantially different. One thing certainly has changed: the present incumbents have a different, new, and inexperienced supervisor.

Planning Group Work

Where the work will be done through team effort—several people working in concert to produce the product or effect—it is best to carry out the planning in group meetings. You use the same techniques and checklists developed for planning one-on-one; you just do it in a group setting. This can be a time-consuming process, especially if the group has not worked or planned together before. You will need to be careful to keep the meeting on track and to keep the group focused on the issues. But the extra time you spend will be worthwhile in the long run because your people will have an opportunity to work out ahead of time any difficulties they anticipate. It is especially useful in helping people avoid conflict as they work together. Group planning sessions allow them to work out what responsibility belongs to what person. This keeps the territorial issues to a minimum later on.

There are some side benefits to group planning. It fosters a feeling for the team, something we all know helps generate energy and enthusiasm. And it helps people develop their communication and group problem-solving skills.

Be careful that group planning doesn't turn into a gripe session. You will have to keep people from going off on "woe-is-us" tangents. The

121

griping will most likely come up when you begin to go over the possible obstacles to getting the work done. Employees may begin to name human obstacles or problems with corporate policy, or another department's way of doing business. A certain amount of ventilation on these issues is actually good. Let them get the gripes off their chests. You will also learn about issues they face. You may have to go to bat for them to change a policy or negotiate better cooperation from other areas. But, you have to keep the lid on crybabyism. Keep asking questions like, "What can we do about that?" "If we can't change it, how can we get around that problem?" "How can we change our plan so that we set a goal we can accomplish despite the problem?" By raising these issues you will keep people thinking about the plan and how to make it workable. Your questions will also help them focus on actions they can take to solve their own problems instead of sitting around feeling bad because no one ever volunteered answers to questions they never asked.

Summary

- The first step to performance appraisal is to define the job and the criteria by which we will judge performance.
- Benefits of performance planning:
  - Employees are more likely to be committed to the work.
  - Employees will take fewer false steps if we set a clear course beforehand.
  - Employees will have the support and resources they need to get the job done.
- How to plan:
  - Always write your plans; don't just think about them.
  - Begin with overall organization or department goals.
  - Get your employees involved in the planning of their own work.
  - Set goals and plans based on overall organization objectives.
  - Add work described in the employee's job description.
  - Modify plan based on employee's strengths and limits.
  - Modify plan based on limits imposed by the environment in which the employee will work.
  - Make detailed action plan, including actions manager will take to support the employee's work.
- Brainstorming may help you and your employees broaden your thinking about what work to include in the plan.

- First, list everything you can think of regardless of whether it is practical.
- After you have listed all your ideas, prune the list to those that are most productive.

- Benefits of employee involvement in planning:
  - Their knowledge and perspective will make the plan more realistic.
  - They are more likely to commit to the plan with enthusiasm.
  - They are less likely to resent being assigned certain tasks if they know why they are doing them and how they fit into the larger picture.
- Criteria for a good plan:
  - Specific
  - Measurable
  - Time-limited
  - Realistic
  - Challenging
- Work plans should include not only objectives but also action plans and statements about the limits of an employee's authority.
- Don't forget to make your own action plan about what you must do to support the work and your follow-up dates.
- Include personal growth objectives in the plan. These can be:
  - Performance improvement goals
  - Career-related goals
- Set performance improvement goals that:
  - Relate to the work
  - Are built into the regular work plan, if possible
  - Represent changes in behavior not personality
- Career goals should be:
  - The employee's own
  - Flexible
  - Both long-range and short-range
- Set standards of performance high and apply them fairly and equally to all employees.
- Relate overall standards of performance to salary. A possible system is:
  - Exceeds Most
  - Exceeds Some
  - Meets All
  - Meets Most
  - Meets Some
- Your own enthusiasm for the plan sets the tone for the employee's response.

Checklist 1

Prepare the Employee to Plan

- Provide copies of organization or department goals.
- Ask the person to review the job description.
- Share information about future business conditions:

  Economic forecasts
  Sales forecasts
  Planned changes in product line, organization, or staffing

- If the budgets for the year have already been approved, share the budget as it affects the individual's work.

Checklist 2

What About the Special Employee?

New Employees

- Go a little light on challenge.
- Give them productive work right away.
- Make objectives shorter term.
- Concentrate on known skills and knowledge, things they've done in past assignments.

Poor Performers

- Accent realistic goals.
- Concentrate on their strengths.
- Plan more frequently.
- Plan for performance improvement over a reasonable period of time.

Timid Employees

- Accent realism in goals.
- Give them plenty of encouragement.
- Plan more frequently.

Experienced, Confident Performers

- Go high on challenge.
- Allow them to evaluate their own capabilities.
- Plan less frequently.
- Give more authority.

124

Checklist 3

Is the Plan a Good One?

For the Employee

- Can the person reasonably be expected to do the work?

  Have there been previous successes with similar work?
- Can the worker learn the required skills or gain the needed knowledge and keep up with the workload? Consider knowledge of the company, its products, its customers, and the employee's coworkers, as well as skills and technical information.

  What experiences, courses, coaching, and counseling will the employee need during the learning period?
- Will the plan sustain the interest and enthusiasm of the employee?
- Will the employee need support from you or others to complete the work?

  What arrangements can you make to remove potential obstacles?
- What limits do you want to put on the employee's authority to carry out the work?

In Your Environment

- Is there time to do the whole plan?
- Are there sufficient resources—people, equipment—to get the job done?
- What are the budgetary limits within which the work must be done?
- What difficulties will your employee encounter because of organization, work rules, personalities or experience levels of customers or coworkers?

  What can you do to remove such difficulties?

  What warnings and information will help your employee succeed despite the difficulties?
- What political issues impinge on the employee's work?

  Can the person handle these issues?

  Should you become involved in parts of the work?
- What changes in or outside the organization are likely to affect the work? Consider the economy, laws or rules, organization, personnel, product line, technology. Will priorities change?

What contingency plans do you need to make for uncertainties?

- What are the downstream effects of the work the employee will be doing?

  Can any potential problems be avoided by adjusting the plan or better preparing people for the changes that will occur as a result of the planned work?

MONITORING/PERFORMANCE FEEDBACK

1. Chapter 4, "Interim Followup," from *Performance Planning and Appraisal,* by Patricia King. (optional)

2. Chapter 5, "Preparing for the Appraisal Interview," from *Performance Planning and Appraisal,* by Patricia King. (optional)

3. "Using Feedback to Improve Performance and Enhance Motivation," unpublished paper by James A. McCaffery. (required)

Chapter 4

Interim Follow-Up

Once you have made a performance plan, you and your employee need to manage that plan. That means your employee must do the work as planned and you must keep the plan on track. By having a clear and specific plan,your employee can have most of the control over the work. But, you need to intervene at regular intervals. Let's talk about how.

Of course, you will observe and interact with your people fairly constantly, but part of your plan will be to schedule regular follow-up between the planning and the ultimate appraisal meetings. You and your employee will meet to review the progress made on the work plan, arrive at solutions to problems, and adjust the plan to better fit reality if that is necessary. This work is an essential part of the planning-appraisal process. In the first step, planning, you set your course. In the last step, appraisal, you review where you are and figure out if that is the place you expected to wind up. The middle step is for checking to make sure you are on course and to see if the final destination you chose still makes sense. You need to do this while there is still time to change direction or rescue the work if it has gotten off course.

Interim follow-up is also an opportunity for you to do, in a scheduled and more formal way, what you ought to be doing continuously: giving encouragement to the troops. Most bosses know they need to do this often, but the press of daily business makes it haphazard. Sometimes we think we do more of it than we really do. For instance, we could easily overlook the needs of the person whose projects are going well while we are problem solving with the person who is having big trouble. Both need attention, and you need a systematic way to make sure that they both get it. This is your opportunity to be a "cheerleader" for your people. You need to applaud their successes. And if they aren't making it, you need to cheer them on to try harder or smarter. And every plan, especially if it is challenging, contains some objectives that will not work

Taken from: Performance, Planning & Appraisal, Patricia King, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, pages 45-52.

out. You need to rework these to make them more realistic or eliminate them before they frustrate and distract your employees. This interim meeting will give your employees another opportunity to participate with you in problem solving and decision making. If you are going to try participative management, it won't work to do it once a year at performance appraisal time. Your people will want consistency in style. Besides, they will be suspicious of your request that they participate at appraisal time if that is the only time you ask them to meet with you to discuss how they are doing. In fact, they are likely to be suspicious of your whole appraisal if you speak to them about their work only in a formal meeting once a year.

Plan your interim follow-up meetings to be a positive, motivating force. This is particularly important for employees who are working on improving performance deficiencies. Keep interim meetings with them as encouraging as possible. Of course, if they aren't making the progress they should, you will have to tell them. But if they are improving, concentrate on congratulating them and being very specific about the improvements you see. Some managers are tempted to exhort people who have improved to keep trying by reminding them of the bad job they used to do or of the evils of lateness and so on. Forget that. If you used the preaching routine once and it worked, go on to something new.

Time spent at interim meetings can have a wonderful effect on the relationship between you and your employee. That relationship is important today and will grow to be critical in the future. More and more modern workers expect that their relationship with their bosses will be interactive and positive. Part of the reward they expect from the job is a feeling of achievement for a job well done. Your formal and informal discussions with them will be part of this reward system. It will also give your employees a steady diet of the confirmation and assurance we all need.

How steady should that diet be? That depends. In most organizations formal performance appraisal is required once a year. Where management by objective or some similar program has been installed, planning is usually done annually. But, certainly no one suggests that boss and subordinate speak together only once a year. How often you schedule more or less formal interim reviews will depend on the same factors we discussed when deciding how often to do planning.

The first thing to consider when deciding when to schedule an in-

terim review is the needs of the employee's job. A chemist working on a six-month stability study doesn't need to review the project's progress every month. Choose a schedule that conforms to the work cycles, to the peaks and valleys of the workload, or to milestones in the life of the project. Certainly, you will want to review progress before a critical due date and far enough in advance so that the project can be rescued if you uncover a serious problem during the review. In this way you can keep control of the work without smothering the employee.

Meet with the employee and review your plan whenever there are serious changes in the work situation. If these can be anticipated (for instance, someone retiring), meet before the change to plan a smooth transition. If the change is unanticipated, meet as soon as possible after you notice it.

New employees, insecure employees, or employees with performance problems will need more frequent follow-up. For new people, you will want to review their initial training and planning frequently, perhaps even monthly. When a new person arrives, there is so much information to absorb that not all of it sinks in. Frequent reviews at the beginning can fill in the blanks left by the information overload of those first few days on the job. If you are going to make a mistake about the timing of interim follow-up, do it too frequently, rather than not frequently enough.

These meetings will serve as reassurance for you as well as for your employee. Therefore you should hold one whenever you need reassurance (provided you are not a bundle of insecurity or you may annoy your people or give them the feeling that you don't trust them). Invite your employees to schedule interim reviews with you any time they feel they need to go over progress and problems.

In the review meeting you want to make sure that the work is progressing and is indeed productive. Once people get involved in activity, they can sometimes begin to see being busy as rewarding. Eventually they will get an empty, useless feeling when they realize, as my brother Andy describes it, they have one foot nailed to the floor. Use the interim review meeting to keep people feeling productive.

Before the Interim Review Meeting

To prepare for the meeting, you and your subordinate should each review the progress of the work against the work plan. You should each be prepared to review the status of the work as you see it and to cover

obstacles and problems and tentative ways of dealing with them. Some managers ask for all this in a written report before the meeting and then use the meeting time to discuss issues and reach agreement on a course of action. If you have been systematic about documenting your observations of the work as it progresses, you may have a file of source material for the discussion.

At the Interim Review Meeting

At the meeting ask your employee to review progress first or if you have gotten a written report make sure that you have properly understood its contents. If all or part of the work has been going well, congratulate and compliment your employee. Be specific about what you have liked. A statement like, "Good job so far, Jake," is not performance feedback. Spend some time talking about areas where you feel your employee faced some difficulty, say what you think the person did to succeed. These words will reinforce the behavior for the future. They will also help the person isolate which actions most contributed to the success so far.

What to Do if the Plan Has Gone off Track

In making the performance plan in the first place, what you have really done is to delegate the work. But you can delegate work and authority, you cannot delegate responsibility. To discharge your own responsibility you must make sure the work gets done well and on time. These interim review meetings will help you do that as well as help the employee keep up the necessary enthusiasm and energy. They will also contribute to your own sense of security and remove some of the stress you feel when you aren't sure things are in control.

Of course you will be observing how things are progressing fairly constantly. You will comment on small matters casually in your day-to-day conversations with your people. This is the best way to handle the trivia. If you save the minor details for a more formal meeting, you will come across as picky and insensitive. If it is important to you, by all means say you wish the daily activity log were kept a little more neatly. But if everything is there and it's legible, don't make a major statement about it. It's best to use a light touch—talk about how glad you are that

131

it's up to date and make the other remark an aside. If the plan has gone off track, the first thing you have to do is to figure out why. Don't jump to conclusions and immediately blame the employee, even if it seems on the surface that the person just isn't doing what's required. There are many reasons why people don't succeed:

- They don't really understand what they should do.
- They don't know how to do it.
- They are prevented from doing it by the system.
- They are punished if they do it.
- They see no reward in doing it.
- They suffer no losses if they don't do it.
- They can't do it no matter how hard they try.

Each of these problems has a different solution. Lectures and exhortation are unlikely to work in any case. But until you know the reason for the lack of progress, there is no point in taking action. Discuss the matter thoroughly. Look for causes. Don't resort to blaming the employee. If the discussion seems to be turning into a witch hunt, you won't get much useful information. And information is exactly what you need to figure out what's really going on. Ask questions but be careful that they don't seem like accusations. Tell your employee that you are looking not to lay blame but to get to the root of the problem. Keep the reasons I've given you in mind and try to find out what the real cause is. Once you've isolated that, the solution should be fairly easy: a clearer explanation of what's required, some training in the skills required, a change in the system, or building into the system the proper rewards.

Some problems are trickier than others. Some managers find it difficult to believe that people can be punished for doing the "right" thing. It happens. When I was working my way through college, I got a summer job working for a firm that reevaluated real estate for tax purposes. The clerical staff in the temporary office were all women, mostly students or recent high school graduates who couldn't type and needed work. We computed the value of homes from information given on cards. Our supervisor was a woman not much older than we. She rang a little bell when we were to start and end the workday, and before and after breaks and lunch. For the first couple of days she taught us our work. Then she announced that we would be expected to complete 50 cards a day. That wasn't too hard; we could all do it. Then she raised the quota to 60 and 70. At 80 cards a day, Miriam started having trouble.

She was a sweet girl from a poor family. We all liked her, and she really needed the job. We would each take a few of her cards and get them done for her, but at that point we were all working at our limit. When the workload increased they hired two new people. By 10:45 on their first day of work, we told them that they should never finish more than 80 cards a day and that we would all like them better if they took their time getting to that level. I don't know what we would have done if they hadn't gone along with us; we would probably have just ostracized them. But performing at a higher level would definitely have been "punished." In fact, we would have felt punished if we had worked faster and Miriam had been fired because she couldn't keep up. Exhortations from our supervisor would have done no good, I'm sure. I didn't know I was learning about management then, but I was.

Employees who can't do the job no matter how hard they try present a different kind of problem. This problem is discussed in Chapter 7 in the section about dealing with poor performers.

If it becomes clear that the original plan is no longer viable, you will have to modify the plan to meet the situation and the time constraints you now face. Work out the new arrangement with your employee, renew your commitment, and start afresh. Avoid the trap of frustration, concentrate on what you can do to solve the problem. Let your employee talk out any discouragement. But don't either of you wallow in it.

It is easy, too, to feel discouraged about planning when the original plan fails. Be patient with yourself. Planning is a skill—like skiing or driving a car—you have to do it for some time before you get really good at it.

Write the changes you agree on, either in the plan or on a separate sheet. At this point you may also want to make some notes to refer to later when you are doing your periodic appraisal. While you are still thinking of them, write down the things you will want to remember for the next appraisal. And don't forget to write down the positives as well as the problems. Most managers don't spend concentrated periods of time with their employees unless there are problems. For this reason, we can get the impression that problems are the rule rather than the exception, even when this is far from the truth. You may need a file of notes to yourself to keep a balanced perspective.

You and your employee will come out of the interim review with things to do. You may have the longer list. Reorganizing and restructuring the environment may be necessary to make it possible for your

employee to complete the work. You may need to meet with people from other departments to remove roadblocks that the employee can't deal with. You don't want to usurp the employee's responsibility or take away the growth opportunity or the feeling of accomplishment that comes from solving one's own problems. However, there are times when your status, clout, or personal contacts can smooth out a situation that the employee would find impossible or too time-consuming.

These interim reviews, like planning, can be carried out in groups. The problem-solving aspects may often be easier when there are more minds around to work on the issue. Some managers schedule periodic "minireviews" at staff meetings. They hold the normal one-to-one reviews, but each month they devote a staff meeting to reports from each person on how things are going and to mutual problem solving. This not only brings other minds to bear on the problems, it fosters a team spirit among the staff members and keeps them informed of one another's work.

124

Summary

- Interim follow-up allows you to:
  - Correct planning mistakes before it is too late.
  - Coach and counsel employees to keep the work on track.
  - Encourage progress.
  - Strengthen your relationship with your employees.
- How often you schedule interim meetings depends on:
  - The job—peaks and valleys and milestones inherent in the work
  - The employee—the person's experience, past record, level of confidence
  - Your need for information about progress
- Hold an interim review:
  - Well in advance of critical due dates
  - Whenever there is a serious change that affects the work
  - More frequently for new or insecure employees and for poor performers
  - Whenever you or your employees need assurance that things are on track
- To prepare for an interim review meeting, you and your subordinate should:
  - Review progress against the plan.
  - Analyze shortfalls.
  - Be ready with suggested action steps for solving problems.
- You may want to ask your employee for a written status report that you will discuss at the meeting.
- Give specific feedback; even if everything is going well, say why and how.
- Reasons the plan might have gone off track:
  - Employee doesn't understand it.
  - Employee lacks requisite skill.
  - The environment makes it impossible.
  - There is no reward.
  - Success leads to "punishment."
- If the plan has gone off track:
  - Figure out why.
  - Don't lay blame.
  - Work out a plan aimed at overcoming the problem.
- You may have to modify the original plan, based on what you find out during interim review.

Chapter 5

Preparing for the Appraisal Interview

Preparing for a performance appraisal interview is like preparing for a trip. Sometimes you can just throw some things in a bag, set out, and have a really great time, but if you want to be sure to have a good time, you take the time to prepare.

Select the Proper Time and Place

Pick a time when you and your employee will be able to concentrate. Remember you are going not only to review past performance, but also to plan for the next period. The appraisal may take more than one meeting, but it should seem like one process and therefore be done within a few days. Both of you must be relatively free from distractions. There will probably never be a time when you are totally devoid of other problems, but at least avoid obviously bad times, like the moment when one employee is waiting to hear if she's got the mortgage on the house or when another's wife is about to give birth.

The timing, as we discussed in the chapter on planning, must make sense in terms of the work as well as in terms of the employee's experience and personal needs. Since you will be doing appraising and planning at the same time, all that applies to planning also applies to appraisal.

Geography is important. First of all you must ensure privacy. No one can concentrate on a discussion of performance if it takes place in a goldfish bowl. Absolutely no one should overhear the conversation. If there are important files in your office that people must get to or if you don't have a private office, reserve a conference room, borrow an office, find some private space. In a training session a manager once told me

Taken from: Performance, Planning & Appraisal, Patricia King, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, pages 53-74.

there was no private space at all where she worked. I suggested she go out in the parking lot and sit in a car. A ridiculous idea, but that's how strongly I feel about privacy.

Plan to hold the meeting in a place where you and your employee can sit face to face without a desk or table between you. If you sit behind your desk with your employee on the other side, you will represent an authority figure. This doesn't encourage a free flow of discussion. If you need a surface to write on as you plan, sit together on the same side of the table.

Some managers are sensitive about where the appraisal interview takes place. John Davis of Waters-Trego in Dallas gives his employees a choice: their offices, his office, or neutral territory. He says this issue only lasts for the first appraisal or two. Once the relationship is well established, no one seems to care where the meeting is held, as long as it's private.

Once you have selected the time and place, you will make the appointment with your employee. Do this well in advance of the meeting. The employee will want to come to the meeting prepared. In fact, later in the book preparing the employee to do a self-appraisal is discussed. There must be time to do this adequately. Once you have made the appointment, you must keep it. If you cancel or postpone it, you will be sending your employee a powerful message: that whatever you are going to do is more important than good performance. By all means don't cancel at the last minute. And never change the date and then change it again.

You will need to prepare your own appraisal of the employee's performance, and you will need to prepare your employee to make a self-appraisal. Let's start with your appraisal.

Assessing Your Employee's Performance

Planning your employee's work carefully will make this aspect of performance appraisal much easier, but no matter how carefully you have planned you still need to assess performance with great care. An appraisal is like most activities; if you aren't willing to put much effort into doing it, you aren't going to get much out of it. Some managers do the whole thing casually without much forethought. Then they expect great changes in their employees' behavior. They don't realize that employees respond, consciously or unconsciously, to the effort that bosses put in. Besides, no matter how carefully you

scrutinized the plan at planning time, no matter how clever you were in assessing the future, when it arrives, the future tends to deal a few surprises.

Fairness dictates that you will do this part of your job carefully. We have said before that many managers detest performance appraisal because they feel so uncomfortable sitting in judgment of others. With our careful planning and employee involvement, we have tried to make the process as fair and objective as possible. This should make it seem less stressful for you since you will be judging the work not the person. But you may still feel uncomfortable. If you do, work harder rather than avoid the issue. I know that people tend to avoid things that make them uncomfortable, but if you give your assessment short shrift so you can get on with doing things that are more fun for you, you could do your organization and your employee a great disservice. The performance appraisal you write today will probably be in the employee's file for many years to come. Decisions will be made based on what it says; if the information is inaccurate it will hurt the employee and the firm. This is probably not comforting, but it is real.

The first step to doing a useful appraisal is to gather information. You will need to look at what the person has done over the review period. Go back to the plan to see how much of it has been accomplished. Look again at the employee's job description for the things that should have been done and compare them with the actual results. You may also have reports of such things as production or sales that will give you a picture of your employee's performance. If you have been following your schedule for interim coaching and counseling, you should have some notes in the file about how things have been going, about things that you found especially admirable or lacking in the employee's performance. Now is the time to pull these out. Remember, it isn't fair to start observing the employee's performance the week before the appraisal meeting and base all your judgments on what you see. You could be getting a skewed picture. For one thing, the week may not be a typical one; it may show the employee at either a disadvantage or an advantage compared with the regular course of work. Furthermore, the employee undoubtedly knows that performance appraisal time is near. That may make her nervous and cause her to work inefficiently or it may cause him to work extra hard to make a good impression. No matter how closely you work with people, you will not know everything they are doing. Now is the time to find out what you know and what you don't know and make up the difference.

You also need to make sure that you concentrate on important matters. Don't let your appraisal drift into minutiae; your employee won't take what you have to say seriously. Nor will your opinions be given attention if they are based on false assumptions. Make sure you are aware of any recent changes in the work environment or other factors that could have made the job easier or more difficult than you originally thought.

Pitfalls to Accurate Appraisal

It is also important that you be aware of difficulties that arise in making an assessment. These are problems that everyone runs into and knowing about them can help you avoid them.

First of all remember that some people have a tendency to rate low. You can remember from school how some teachers were dreaded because they were considered "low markers." The opposite is also true. You may have a tendency to mark everyone "up" because you are lenient, afraid to harm their future chances, or reluctant to discuss problems. Remember, being too lenient can cause problems later. People who think they are doing well will expect raises and promotions to match what you have told them about their performance.

Or you may be a victim of what statisticians call "central tendency." This is the temptation to think of everyone as average. The problem with these three tendencies is that they prevent us from being accurate in our assessments. That makes the appraisal not only unfair but less useful. One of the characteristics of highly successful managers is that they are able to differentiate among high, average, and low performers. If you tend to rate everyone in one category, you need to pay closer attention to what the employee has or has not achieved and begin to make better distinctions.

Another problem with trying to assess performance objectively is the tendency people have to claim credit for things that go right and to blame others or outside influences when things go wrong. If the work has not gone well, you may be inclined to blame the employee, but your employee will find other reasons, outside his or her own efforts, for the failure. And you may both be right. It may be a combination of both the employee's work performance and the external factors. You need to be careful that you don't wind up blaming one another for poor performance. Try to sort out the problems so you know what their causes really are.

Another issue, which seems to be part of human nature, is the tendency of managers to blame poor performance on weaknesses in the employee's character rather than on specific behavior or elements in the employee's environment (or heaven forbid the manager's own ineptitude). If Vic Shemsky isn't getting his sales reports in on time, it is because he's lazy or chronically late, or sloppy. It isn't because he is making more sales calls than anyone else and doesn't have time to write them all up, or that he doesn't see the need to do all that writing, or that he feels uncomfortable writing reports. If you ask Vic why he isn't writing his reports, you can be sure he won't say "because I'm lazy." Does this mean there is no such thing as a lazy person. No. But it does mean that we have to be careful that we don't take the easy way out when assessing performance and attribute failures to personality problems. Besides, we have already said that there isn't much we can do to change people's personalities. If we look for another cause for the problem, we may be able to come up with a viable solution.

This problem of personality is particularly hard to avoid if you don't get along well with the employee. If you don't like Vic, you are more likely to blame his late reports on his personality. If you like him, you will find another reason, a way of forgiving him. Our biases about race, sex, age, and nationality show up in subtle ways here too. Some people rate minorities and women lower than others; some expect so little of them that anything they accomplish seems like a miracle and gets very high marks; others bend over backward to give them a break and rate them higher than they deserve. Can you clear your mind of some of these biases? Can you be aware of how your own biases affect your judgment and unbalance your conclusions?

One of the really sneaky pitfalls may occur when you are doing appraisals on two or more people at a time. If you have just looked at the performance of a real "superstar," the next person's performance may pale by comparison, and you may give the second person a lower rating than is warranted. Conversely, an average performer may get a higher than warranted rating if you have just been wrestling with the problems of the worst person in your group.

Some people look as if they're trying very hard. As they work we are aware of the enormous effort they are putting in. We have a tendency to admire this industry and rate "tryers" high. Others may accomplish as much or more, but they make it look easy. They tend to be rated lower because we don't see their efforts. For instance, June does an excellent job as a product manager, but she doesn't stay as late or look

as haggard as her colleagues. She's accomplishing her objectives, but Harry, her boss, doesn't see her spending long hours at her desk. Harry would probably scrutinize June's work less and admire her accomplishments more if she made the job seem hard. When you appraise performance, are you looking at how much sweat went into the work or how much good came out of it?

The last, and hardest, task is to reduce the distortion your own personality creates. We all have a tendency to reject people who have traits that are the opposite of our own, regardless of whether those traits affect their work. Let me give you an example. Art is a slob. His desk and his office are unbelievably messy. His boss's desk rarely contains anything but a piece of paper or two and a telephone. He tells Art that a sloppy desk is a sign of a sloppy mind. (Art wonders what an empty desk signifies.) The question is can Art's boss objectively measure Art's contribution and ignore the mess in Art's office? Given his personality, the boss would probably have trouble with that.

When you evaluate performance you have to decide whether the job was done well or poorly, but if everything isn't just as it should have been and you are going to correct the situation for the future, you also have to figure out why the work was unsatisfactory. Don't be too quick to assume that your employee just didn't try hard enough. Reconsider the factors you used to plan the job. Was it reasonable to begin with? In retrospect, does the work still seem to have been realistic? Did some unforeseen change take place in the environment? In looking for causes, adopt a problem-solving, not a blaming, mode.

One way to separate the symptoms from the problems is to look at skills and abilities, rather than attitudes. Whether you tend to be too hard or too lenient, this approach will help you overcome some of your biases and give your employee a fairer appraisal. Once people know that their work will be judged by what they accomplish, most of them will be more highly motivated, and will work harder, and achieve more. When you evaluate the performance of your people, you must look not only at the outcome but at the methods. Did this person exceed the objectives by running roughshod all over the rest of the staff? Were the work goals accomplished at the expense of others accomplishing theirs? When you appraise the performance of a person, you must look at what the person did or did not do, but you must also put those accomplishments in context. Otherwise you can breed blind ambition. For you to be an effective manager, your whole group has to be effective, and everyone in it has to be able to deal effectively with the rest of the

141

organization. If your people are ruining one another's chances of success or the chances of people in other departments, you need to help them redefine "success." Think of the loss of productivity when people stand around and discuss how difficult it is to work with Bill or Grace. Consistent high performance over the long run is what we want to foster in our people, not short-term success that mortgages the future.

Getting Other Opinions

Often you can improve the accuracy of your own judgments and avoid some of the pitfalls we've just described by getting opinions from others who know the work of your employees. Other people probably already give you informal feedback on how your people are doing. Customers complain about or compliment your sales representatives. Other managers or supervisors casually mention a good job or a problem. You may want to stick a note in the file when you hear these things so you'll remember them at appraisal time. Better yet, you may want to seek out a balanced picture of your employees' performance by asking others who have observed them to share those observations with you. This way you will have more information on which to base your own evaluation. By having more than one perspective, you can avoid errors in judgment that stem from too narrow a view.

By asking for the evaluation rather than just passively accepting what others choose to tell you, you will get a more balanced view. Since many people think of making comments only when they have something to complain about, many informal comments are skewed toward the negative. By going to meet with other managers and asking for a more formal appraisal, you are more likely to get a thoughtful response. And you not only will make your own evaluation more reliable but you also will foster good relations with the people whose comments you solicit. They will feel flattered that you care about their opinions and know that you regard them as important.

If the employee you are evaluating hasn't worked for you for very long and there are others in your organization who have supervised the person in the past, you may want to make your own evaluation and then check it with the employee's previous boss. Of course, you will have read the previous evaluation in the employee's personnel file, but don't stop there. You know how written information can sometimes be distorted. Check out your interpretations in a discussion to make sure you understand what you've read.

142

You will want to get other opinions whenever you don't have an opportunity to observe your employee firsthand, for instance, when appraising salespeople who work from a different location. You might also seek other opinions when you feel it is difficult for you to be objective in your assessment. Sometimes you are just too close to the work to be able to see what is really happening. This is true especially if you don't get along very well with your employee. Sometimes another person can help you separate personality issues from issues of skill and job effectiveness. How, for instance, will I ever be able to see whether my managerial style prevents my people from doing the job. If I have good friends in the organization who can be honest and who can see what's happening in my group, I may be able to get that information from them.

Of course, you don't want to just accept the evaluations of others. You have to "evaluate the evaluation." We have said that you can't simply read the previous written evaluations. They may not be written clearly, you may misinterpret what they mean, or the previous supervisor may not have written in total honesty. You know that sometimes managers write things that are different from what they really feel, because they want to justify a raise or because they misguidedly think it's kinder to say only nice things. When you check out someone's previous written appraisal or ask for an evaluation from someone who has another perspective on your employee's work, ask for the same kind of specifics we have said are necessary from your own appraisal. Find out how that person came to conclusions and ask for examples of what the employee did or did not do. You should never accept character or personality evaluations. These are not helpful since they don't appraise performance. When two managers sit together and discuss personality, they are not appraising, they're simply gossiping.

Whatever another person tells you about your employee, be sure to screen the information for whatever biases that evaluator may have. You want information that can either validate or change your own opinion, not a new set of biases. You need to filter what you hear through your knowledge of the other evaluator's perspective. Don't just accept the opinion of another manager who may have some ax to grind by making your subordinate look either bad or good.

You may find that your more self-confident and ambitious employees may ask other managers for feedback on their performance or about their prospects with the firm. For the most part you should regard this

as positive, unless you feel it is a sign that your employees are not getting enough of the right kind of help from you. If you aren't coaching and counseling as you should, then solve the problem by becoming more aware of the person's needs and doing what you can. Some managers would try to solve the problem by forbidding the employee to seek such advice outside the unit. That approach would only make the problem worse.

If your colleagues come to you for an appraisal of their employees, give the same kind of specific, thoughtful evaluation you would want from them. Certainly, you will not share appraisal information on anyone unless you know why and how it will be used. Those who seek information about how you view the work of your own or other managers' people must first be willing to tell you why they are interested in knowing what you think.

Prepare Your Employee to Appraise the Work

Many managers fear asking employees to do a self-appraisal. They feel employees will build themselves up and that it will then be impossible to get them to think realistically. Managers also feel that employees will not respond. These fears are largely unfounded if employees are asked to evaluate the work, rather than to give themselves a rating—a 3 or an "outstanding." We come here to the same issue raised earlier with managers' evaluations. We cannot ask employees to evaluate their own characters or to provide some overall description of themselves. That would put them severely on the defensive. The question we need to ask is How did the work go? We want employees to comment on the goals and objectives, whether they were accomplished and how well. To the extent that we have written a specific, measurable plan, it should be obvious whether or not the work has been accomplished.

Then why bother with employee self-evaluation? Well, having actually worked the plan, the employee will have many ideas on what that experience was like and how it went. Where there are still some leftover gray areas (there will be more of these in some kinds of work than in others), you will need to hear the employee's opinion about whether what happened was more on the positive or negative side. You will have discussed problems already, but you will want to hear the employee's opinion of how things ended up.

To be fair, you have to give your employee warning, I'd say at least a week, before the appraisal meeting. When you set up the date for the meeting with your employee, ask the person to come to the meeting prepared to talk about accomplishments, problems, new objectives for the next planning cycle, and personal and professional growth. Say what you expect to do at the meeting and how you expect to conduct it. Suggest rereading the work plan and job description, reviewing whatever reports are available and so forth. In other words, ask your employee to prepare for the meeting by reviewing the same material you will be looking at. Some managers share their entire file with the employee, even the notes they write to themselves and drop in the file throughout the year. My friend Howard Denmark allows his employees free access to the file anytime. He says, "It's in my desk, and they can read it or put stuff in it any time they like."

When you prepare your employee to do self-appraisal, set the meeting up as a discussion not as a courtroom where judgments will be made. Don't say, "I'm going to evaluate your performance." Say rather, "We're going to talk about your performance, review how things have gone with this year's work plan, and start working on next year's plan." In a certain sense, you will not make a formal evaluation of the employee until after the meeting since you will not write your evaluation until then. This sequence will make the discussion easier and more useful. The employee will not feel it is a judgment, and you will have the benefit of the employee's point of view before you write up an appraisal or make any decisions.

This brings us to the issue of that form from the personnel department. If there is such a form, give a copy of it to the employee. Say, "After our meeting, I will be filling out a form like this one based on our discussion." Tell the employee what will be done with the form and how it will be used. Of course, your experienced employees will already have gone through this process and will know the drill. Even new employees should have found out about the system at the very beginning, but this is a good time to remind the person of the procedure. Some managers review the blank form with the employee before the meeting. Then at the meeting boss and subordinate fill it out together. But don't have the form all filled out before the meeting. That will make the discussion seem like a mere formality.

Always take care in this preappraisal setup to assure the employee that this will be a positive and helpful discussion. If you have an open and easy working relationship with the person, this will be easy. If

the relationship has been cool, it may be difficult to establish the right openness and trust. If the appraisal discussion is going to be productive, you must start early and work out your thornier communications difficulties. Otherwise the appraisal discussion will have little value.

Planning the Discussion

Once you have gathered the information, made your own analysis, and set up the meeting with your employee, you will need to plan the discussion. Even though you are going to encourage the employee to participate fully in the discussion, you will want to know where you want the discussion to go so you can keep it on track. Full participation by the employee is a wonderful goal, but this does not mean that you give up control.

The first rule to follow here is to limit the objectives and the topics of the discussion. When you talk about sitting down to review six months or a year of a person's work life and to plan the next six months or a year, you must concentrate on what is important and not let the conversation stray into trivia. There is no time in a thorough appraisal and planning meeting for trivia. Besides, focusing on trivial matters may give the employee the impression that you are a nitpicker or that you feel minutiae are critical. Instead, look over the list of things you might discuss and pick those that will make a real difference.

If you are looking at areas of improvement for your employee, you will want to limit the number of things you want the person to try to improve. No one can take a long laundry list of their supposed faults and start correcting them all. We all need to try to improve a little at a time. Most people can't even listen to a long list of their supposed faults. And as you plan this part of the discussion, you may want to have a few suggestions ready about how your employee can overcome the difficulties. But don't make official decisions about the method. Decide that at the meeting and pretty much leave the steps involved up to the employee. It's critical that you get the employee's commitment to these performance improvement goals and that will be easier if the person can say how the goal will be accomplished.

The culmination of your planning will be to make a specific agenda for the meeting. There is a general agenda at the end of this chapter to guide you.

Anticipating Problems

You may say anticipating problems is what you always do when you think of performance appraisal. The problem is that many of us anticipate problems in a vague or unrealistic way. We expect things to happen that are very unlikely; we never really put a face on the monster we fear. This leads to a general dislike for performance appraisal and then to a reluctance to do it. I suggest we get very concrete and have a plan ready for handling the real problems that might occur during the meeting.

The most common problem is that managers worry that the employee will reject the manager's evaluation and take a belligerent attitude. I don't know how often this occurs, but I'm certain that you can minimize the risk of it occurring if the employee understands that the appraisal will be based not on personality but on accomplishments and expectations that were clearly communicated at the outset.

Employees will respond more positively if they are treated with respect. This means that their ideas, feelings, and concerns are taken into consideration by their managers. You can say some pretty negative things to people, but if you say them with respect they will have the hoped-for effect. The next chapter details the techniques of supportive communication techniques that will help you communicate emotionally charged subjects.

If you anticipate negative reactions for all your appraisals, you may just be insecure about your ability to do the job well. There is only one cure for that. Learn what you can. Take the techniques from this and other books and try them out. Use the ones that work for you until you begin to be more comfortable with the skill. If you are going to continue to pursue a career in management, there is no way to avoid performance appraisal. You might as well master it.

Perhaps it is only certain appraisals that make you anxious. Examine which ones. Are they only the negative ones? If so, you may need to work on your communications skills so that you feel better about your ability to get criticism across gracefully. And remember, most people do not look gleefully upon the idea of criticizing another person. Those who do probably have some serious problems of their own.

Do appraisals of certain employees give you pause? Why? What are their similarities? Are they all older than you? Are they all members of the opposite sex? Or do you have trouble simply because you don't get along so well with certain members of your staff? Whatever the cause,

you will be better able to cope with, and perhaps solve, the problem if you understand it.

If you ordinarily don't feel so negative, but a particular appraisal bothers you, it may be that you need to think over your conclusions. If you are reluctant to discuss them because you are unsure of them, perhaps you need to gather more information or reanalyze the issues. Certainly if you haven't faith in your own judgments, your employee will have even more trouble accepting what you say. No matter how hard you try to put on a confident face, consciously or subconsciously your employee will know you are unsure and reject your conclusions. Perhaps this is the basis of much of the difficulty that many of us have with performance appraisal. Deep down we know how hard it is to make a fair judgment of someone's work, and not feeling secure, we telegraph our underlying insecurity to the employee who either doubts our word or, more likely, adds our insecurity to his or her own. If all of this is so, the only solution I can think of is to develop our skills for analyzing how well the job was done. Then the careful, explicit planning and the unambiguous communication of our expectations up front become doubly important.

Accentuate the Positive

Most books and training programs on performance appraisal concentrate heavily on how to handle problems and how to make negative feedback palatable. This subject will get a good deal of attention in the next two chapters. It is true that many managers have a great deal of trouble with negatives and criticisms. But it is just as difficult for some people to give compliments. And this is a critical skill for managers. In fact, a case could be made that complimenting good performance is so important that if we had to choose between giving only compliments or only criticism, we should choose to give only compliments.

First of all, compliments give people what psychologists call "positive reinforcement" for their behavior. When someone does something and is rewarded by praise for that action, that person is likely to do the same thing again. Behavior can be shaped by people's need for praise and attention. Managers can use this powerful tool to guide the work of their people.

And praise for good work adds to people's self-confidence. You are aware, I am sure, of the link between self-confidence and high performance. In fact, more people fail or are stymied in their careers by a lack

of confidence than by any other single factor. By learning to praise our people, we can enhance their self-images and let them know that we hold them in high regard. This feeling of self-worth will draw out their inner motivations. Because they feel we appreciate their efforts, they will be willing to give more.

If you are a manager who feels uncomfortable giving praise, you may not give it as freely as you should. This might mean that most of what your people hear from you is negative, and you could be giving them the impression that the efforts they make mean nothing to you. If your criticisms outweigh your compliments, they will be unwilling to give the extra bit since it will only seem to go unnoticed.

Praise is a reward for good performance and people see it that way, just as they see raises and promotions as rewards. It is certainly the least costly reward you can give. It is a way you can encourage your under-achievers and reward your best people. Speaking of your best people these are the ones you can easily forget. As we have said, your not-so-good performers will need lots of attention, and in the rush to get everything done it is easy to forget to give your best people the praise they deserve.

If compliments are so wonderful, since they make people feel so good and they are so useful, why is it that people find them so difficult to give? Well even though praise can have all the good effects we have seen, just like anything else, people have to learn how to handle it. This is true of both givers and receivers.

If you are a person who finds praise hard to take, you may find it very difficult to give. People who lack confidence in themselves often find compliments difficult to accept. They become embarrassed when they receive them, and therefore see the act of giving them as embarrassing too. Men are more often likely to find it embarrassing to give compliments, especially to other men.

Some managers worry about giving praise because they fear giving people what when I was a kid was called "a big head." In those days parents worried about this a lot. If your kid got good marks on her report card you said "keep trying" because you were afraid that if you said "great job" that would be the end of the effort. We believe today that the opposite is true: Praise can make people try harder if it is given skillfully and accepted readily.

What makes praise hard for some people to take? As I said before, it embarrasses them, and it does this because most of us have been brought up to believe that bragging is wrong. We extend this taboo

against bragging and begin to feel that graciously accepting a compliment is the same as tooting your own horn. Have you ever complimented someone on a new piece of clothing only to get an immediate rundown on how she bought it on sale or an explanation that his wife really picked it out or it's really old. We tend to feel that to be polite we must somehow deny the praise we receive.

Some people are automatically suspicious of those who praise them. They expect all praise to be flattery and assume that anyone who praises them must have some ulterior motive. Other people see compliments and praise as just one of the social graces. A person who says something nice is just giving a compliment to be polite. How many times have you heard the phrase, "Oh, you're just saying that"?

For all of these reasons, people often hear praise and outwardly accept it graciously, but feel more hurt or embarrassed than pleased. If they do this, all the potential positive effects of the praise are lost. We can, however, learn to give praise so that it will have all the positive effects we want it to have.

First there are a bunch of things to avoid. Number one is the main bugaboo of this book so far: vagueness. Avoid general, indefinite statements, whether positive or negative.

If you are being positive, be positive. Don't give a person a compliment and then follow it with a complaint. People will wind up waiting for the "but." This is important not only if you are conducting an appraisal, but particularly if you are speaking in front of a third party.

As with all performance feedback, don't talk about the person's personality or character. Praising a person's character is not as harmful as criticizing it, but this is still not a good idea. If you feel you have the right to judge whether people are good, you may feel you also have the right to judge whether they are bad. It's best to avoid expressing this kind of judgment.

Some people who want to give a genuine compliment and find themselves too embarrassed to do it will make an insult out of the compliment. For example, someone might say, "That's a great tie, Jack. Your wife must be picking out your clothes these days." This does no good; Jack winds up feeling bad about himself and the giver of the "compliment."

Equally harmful is the compliment that always involves someone else. No one wants self-worth always to depend on being better than someone else. One wonders why another person is always the yardstick by which one is measured. This fosters a sort of false "sibling rivalry"

between employees. If you are going to compliment someone it should be on the person's own merits. This is another way that a good performance plan helps. If you compliment a person's work, you can do it in relation to the plan, and you don't need to have any other basis of comparison.

Use Compliments Constructively

Some managers will use thinly disguised compliments as criticism. They are uncomfortable with giving performance feedback or they value their own wit more than they value their subordinates' good performance. These people can make a genuine compliment impossible to accept because they have "polluted" so many of their own compliments. People get so used to getting insults thinly veiled as compliments that they suspect all compliments. Under this heading come such barbs as:

Damning with faint praise. The eighteenth-century English poet Alexander Pope used this phrase to described what critics in the papers often do: give a paltry compliment where a bigger one is expected. In business, this comes out in statements like, "Well, gee, Margaret, I guess I should be grateful. After all, you did get some words on paper and you spelled them all correctly." If we sometimes express hostility in the form of faint praise, people won't trust our sincerity.

The "gotcha" compliment. This one starts out as a compliment, but ends up as criticism. Bosses who are afraid to make people overconfident will use this technique, for example, "Well, Hank, you did a great job getting the data together and analyzing the results. Remember though, that when you report this to the executive committee, you have to do a decent job. No more fidgeting and mumbling." This sort of comment leaves someone who has just done a good job fearing failure in the future. The person doesn't get a chance to enjoy present success. And if there is no enjoyment, there is less motivation to try hard in the future.

The "patronizing parent" compliment. Here the manager really wants to encourage the employee to do better, but the "compliment" comes out like this, "I know you are a bright woman, Alice. If you would only learn to listen to the clients more carefully, I'm sure you will be able to sell Allied on our proposal."

Enough of those remarks and the employee will start to wince as soon as she hears the compliment.

There are probably other forms of this type of "praise," but you get the message. If you engage in this kind of "compliment," you will forfeit your ability to use the sincere compliment, which can be one of your most powerful tools as a manager. Instead, here is how to handle praise effectively:

Be specific. Always tell the people you are praising exactly what they did that you found praiseworthy. This will increase the chances that they will learn from your compliment what the job requires.

Be direct. Say as simply and clearly as you can that you admire thus-and-so that the person has done. Even if it is difficult for you, learn to bite the bullet, look your employee in the eye and say, "Solving that problem took a lot of extra time, Jo. I appreciate your staying late and getting it done."

Directness also means that you talk to the person, not send your message through someone else. If the person does not work directly for you, but for someone who reports to you, talk to both of them. A compliment that comes from the boss's boss can be particularly powerful. And note that I said talk to the person. Sending a thank-you gift is a great idea, but only if you have expressed yourself by talking to the person as well.

Do it often. If your praise comes very infrequently, people may be suspicious of it just because it is so unusual. They will ask themselves if you are saying something nice because you want something.

Say it first. The novelist Kurt Vonnegut says he hates the words "I love you" because the only possible answer is, "I love you, too." Don't make your people think that you give praise only as a response to flattery.

One way to enhance the power of your praise is to take opportunities to give it publicly. Criticism must be given in private. But praise can be given in public if a natural opportunity presents itself. This both enhances its value to the receiver and sends a message to others about what kind of performance you admire.

If you have employees who have trouble accepting praise, teach them how to accept it. Years ago my friend and colleague Earl Garris taught me to accept praise gracefully. I had a lot of trouble receiving compliments then, and Earl noticed this. His method of teaching me to

accept them may be useful to you. He first pointed out the problem—every time he complimented me, I found some reason other than my own efforts to credit for my success. He insisted that each time he praised me that I say nothing but "thank you" and count to ten. If I started my old routine, he reminded me that it was polite to say "thank you." It took a while, but not too long, and he helped a great deal. I learned more than just how to accept compliments graciously. I learned to enjoy my own successes more fully. You can help the people who work for you do this. They'll never forget it.

What about Criticism

With all this talk about praise, you may think that I feel there is no room for criticism in performance appraisal. That's not entirely correct. There are times when we will have negative things to say about what our employees have done, and we need to talk about how to handle that. We will deal with the subject at length when we discuss poor performers in a later chapter, but let's talk a little about it now.

First, the important thing to remember about criticism is that pure criticism doesn't usually motivate people to improve. It makes them feel bad about themselves and may make them so defensive that they spend more time telling themselves that they're not so bad and not enough time thinking about whether the criticism is valid and how to correct the problem. Appraisals are more likely to get positive results if they emphasize the positive. Some managers, however, tend to emphasize the negative. Like judges watching Olympic skaters, they look for reasons to take points off. Their appraisals tend to emphasize people's mistakes and failures. Because this approach is so prevalent, I push people very hard to make the appraisal a session about the employee's strengths and successes as well as a review of the person's weaknesses and failures. Building up people's confidence is a big part of getting them to succeed. Hence my emphasis on praise. But I admit that criticism is sometimes unavoidable.

Everybody talks about criticism as being "constructive," but some of us have no idea what makes criticism constructive rather than destructive. The difference is really quite simple. Destructive criticism merely states what the failure has been, but offers no way of changing the situation and no encouragement to employees that they can do better. To make your criticism constructive:

152

1. **Be specific.** Here's our old friend again. State what you feel needs to be changed in behavioral terms. Say what the person did or didn't do and give one or two representative examples. Never dwell on the person's failures. Brevity is important here. And note that I said failures not failings. Never speak about problems as being part of the person's character.
2. **Offer suggestions about what to do instead.** "Here's what you have been doing; here's what might work better." That's the approach to take. Often you can state the problem and work with the employee to work out alternative courses of action.
3. **Encourage the employee.** An expression of your faith that the person can make the necessary change will go a long way to making it seem possible and bringing out the employee's motivation to try.
4. **Give your support.** Find out from your employee how you can be helpful. If you are willing to make the effort, then maybe the employee will too.

Some managers, in an effort to be kind, will avoid saying anything negative to the employee. This is pure cowardice. Your job is to control the work, and you don't do it by fibbing to a person about performance. Some managers have been known to go so far as to write the problems down for the file, then soft-pedal them to the employee. Fairness dictates that what you write and what you say be the same.

What about Personal Problems

When you analyze your employee's performance, you may come to the conclusion that the lack of results is caused by some special problem the employee has: difficulties at home, financial worries, a drinking, drug, or psychological problem. These are difficult things for a manager to handle. By criticizing performance, you can make the person's problem worse.

Watch for deteriorating performance. You may suspect personal problems as the cause if the employee had been doing a good job but lately has been falling behind. Some experts estimate that as many as 10 percent of U.S. workers have personal problems that affect their work performance. These can also cause other problems: lower morale among fellow employees, high absenteeism, accidents on the job. In the past, employees with problems were just fired. Today, employers real-

154

ize that an employee represents an investment and an asset. It is better to try to rescue the person and restore good performance than to start over training a new person. Besides, you may face legal problems if you terminate a person with medical or financial difficulties. You can help rehabilitate a troubled employee. First of all, never treat this sort of thing casually. You must take anything you do very seriously. You need to decide whether this is something you are going to approach with the employee. You may want to skip the discussion altogether and get the professionals from the medical or personnel department to handle the entire problem. You may want to go to them for advice about what you can or cannot do.

If you decide to meet with the employee yourself, never treat the problem as if it is the employee's fault. Using a matter-of-fact tone, tell the person what you have observed and why it is a problem on the job. You may be so nervous about bringing the subject up that you will talk too much. Say little and whatever you say, say it quietly. Take the pressure off the employee by saying that you feel that this is not something the person did on purpose.

Keep away from amateur psychoanalysis. Why the problem exists—why Lucy drinks or Marvin always feels persecuted—is not your business. It would be tactless, and could exacerbate the problem, for you to indulge in this sort of speculation. Offer to help the person in any way you can. But don't try to replace the professionals. Financial, psychological, or family problems can be complex and difficult. Beware of taking simplistic steps to correct them. When in doubt, get advice from an expert in the field.

Assessing employees' performance and helping them improve and grow requires all the sensitivity we as bosses can muster. This is true especially when we must deal with the troubled employee.

155

Summary

- Schedule the performance appraisal meeting.

  When

  - You and your employee can give full attention to the subject.
  - You will have time to do it justice.

  Where

  - You will have total privacy.
  - You can sit and face each other.
  - On "neutral territory" if that will make a difference.
- Once you set the date, keep it.
- To assess your employee's performance, review:
  - Work plan for the period
  - Job description
  - Notes in the employee's file
  - Reports of production, sales, and so forth
- Ask your employee to do the same.
- In appraising performance, beware of:
  - Harshness
  - Excessive leniency
  - Central tendency
  - Blaming the person's "personality"
  - Overlooking problems outside the employee's control
  - Biases that relate to race, sex, age, or nationality
  - Letting the last appraisal you did influence your thinking on this one
  - Giving high ratings only to those who "look" as if they're working
- Look for reasons why objectives were not met.
- Get opinions from others if:
  - Their observations will make your own assessment more accurate.
  - The person hasn't worked for you for very long.
  - Others have more frequent contact with your employee.
  - When your relationship with the employee threatens your objectivity.
  - When you feel your management style may be a key factor in the employee's performance.
- Ask for specifics, not just general comments, about your employee's work.
- Weigh the opinions of other managers in the light of their perspective on the employee and the job.

156

- Prepare your employee to do a self-appraisal by:
  - Stating the purpose of the appraisal meeting
  - Presenting the meeting as a mutually beneficial discussion, not a judging session
  - Giving the employee all the information you have for making your assessment
  - Setting up the appointment at least a week in advance to give the employee time to prepare
- If your company has an appraisal form, fill it out after, not before, the meeting.
- To keep the appraisal meeting under control:
  - Set objectives for it.
  - Limit the objectives to what is most important in the employee's performance.
- Anticipate problems that may occur during the meeting. Know ahead of time how you plan to respond.
- Praise is one of your most powerful management tools. To use it effectively:
  - Be specific.
  - Be direct.
  - Do it often.
  - Say it first.
- To make criticism constructive:
  - Make it specific.
  - Offer suggestions about what to do.
  - Offer encouragement by expressing your faith that the person can change.
  - Offer your own help.
- If personal problems—financial or marital difficulties, drinking, drugs, and so on—are the causes of poor performance, seek advice about what to do from professionals.

Agenda for Performance Appraisal Meeting

- Manager opens the meeting:
  - States objectives of the session
  - Sets tone of openness and free discussion
- Employee presents self-assessment.
- Manager responds to the employee's remarks.
- Both look for causes of any problems.
- Both set objectives and work out a plan for the next period.

157

AID

USING FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE PERFORMANCE AND ENHANCE MOTIVATION

by

James A. McCaffery

"You know, you got to take the bones with the gravy", said the manager.

"Uh, I am not sure..., ah, 'the bones with the gravy'?", stammered the subordinate in this simulated feedback situation during the Management Skills Course workshop.

"Yup," said the manager with a certain kind of finality, "you just got to take the bones with the gravy."

The subordinate, with furrowed brow and puzzled look, said, "Ah, okay."

At first, when asked what this meant, observors said that if this were a real situation, the "subordinate" would have "gotten the message". When pressed, however, people were unable to be specific, and decided that maybe the feedback was not that effective after all. Indeed, the "subordinate" in the situation said he really did not understand what was meant, and had no idea what action to take as a result of the conversation. Although the words were of interest because of their somewhat mystical tone, the "feedback" had been of little practical value.

An unusual situation? Perhaps. Taking "the bones with the gravy" does have a memorable ring to it, but the question might be asked -- in general, how well do managers let subordinates know on an ongoing basis how well or how poorly they are doing?

Not very well, and not very often, our experience suggests.

The results of this paucity of effective feedback are serious and negative. People who work in organizations often do not know how others in the organization regard their work. People continue unknowingly to perform work functions in ways that important others regard as "bad". Staff development suffers, since one's positive performance and negative habits are not identified. The motivational power of positive feedback is severely constrained when people do not provide it.

When feedback is provided, it is often done under stress, in a crisis, or after a mistake, and it is given in these circumstances in abrasive and less than helpful ways. In a worse case scenerio, someone gets reassigned

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to a less desirable position or even fired for something that no one has ever seriously talked to the person about, and the person quite legitimately asks, "Why wasn't I ever told this before".

Results like these are important, and affect every corner of organizational life. They seriously inhibit production, and they have a powerful - if sometimes indirect - impact on morale and turnover.

Before looking in depth at feedback as a management tool, we need to be clear about the way the term feedback is being used in this article. Feedback means letting someone know on a timely and ongoing basis how they are performing, and it includes making positive or negative observations (or both). Used this way, feedback is meant to be given independent of any formal performance review process.

Although effective feedback should also be a part of that process, a manager who limits feedback to performance appraisal time is seriously underutilizing it as a management tool. The premise of this article is that managers should be skillful enough to make feedback a normal and natural and non-threatening part of everyday organizational life. And the climate should be such that the feedback is not just between managers and subordinates, but between peers on a work team, or between people who must work together even though they work for different divisions.

FEEDBACK — ABUSED AND MISUSED

Through consulting and management development programs, we come in contact each year with thousands of managers at all levels and from a variety of management contexts. The evidence from this work -- which involves watching managers at work in real situations, as well as drawing observations from workshops -- increasingly suggests that most managers give and receive feedback ineffectively.

There is ample data to support this conclusion. Perhaps most powerful - because it is so universal - is the failure of managers in training workshops to carry out simulated feedback conversations effectively even when the conditions have been set up for success. Before each skill practice simulation, guidelines for giving and receiving feedback are reviewed, a model feedback discussion is viewed and debriefed (participants are often being quite skillful about critiquing the model session), and individuals are given time to prepare for their own skill practice. Yet, when it is time for skill practice, the managers often carry out the conversation ineffectively, and many are way off the mark.

One might say, "yes, but this is a workshop, participants are nervous, it is not a real situation", and so on. There is some truth in this. However, if people are good at something, if they do it well on a regular basis on the job, they will generally do it well in a workshop setting. The only difference may be some initial nervousness which is quickly overcome.

In addition, participants often make comments like the following afterwords: "This is difficult"; "I don't do this very often"; "This is

harder than it looks"; "This takes a lot of thought". Comments like these tend to indicate that giving feedback is not an activity that managers know well and are fluent with.

There is an interesting experiment which provides another source of interesting data about feedback. Ask a group of managers -- at about the same organizational level -- if they are satisfied with the quality and quantity of feedback they give to subordinates. Then ask how many of them are satisfied with the quality and quantity of feedback from their managers. Invariably, 75% raise their hand in response to the first question, and often less than 20% raise their hand after the second question. When we have asked that question of different levels of managers in the same organization, the response pattern has been the same.

This, of course, suggests someone is lying.

When this response pattern is pointed out to these same groups, there is a shock of recognition, followed by rueful laughter, and then most admit that they probably don't do it as well as they would like to think.

As an addition to this exercise, we have asked how many feel they receive sufficient positive feedback. Usually only about 1 or 2 of twenty respond positively to this question. More interestingly, when the question is asked, people generally respond with bursts of laughter. They seem to find it to be a strange question, as if receiving positive feedback is as likely to happen as finding a toaster that actually works for more than one month.

This workshop data is supported by consulting work done within organizations. Organizational survey work and other forms of data gathering unearth a consistant pattern within most work places -- people at all levels feel they do not receive sufficient feedback. At best, some people say that they "definitely hear when something really goes wrong". Unfortunately, that is often done in a threatening and abrasive manner (as in "You idiot, you screwed this up. Fix it immediately"). This kind of feedback might result in the fixing of a short term problem, but generally results in the growth of long term ill-will.

FEEDBACK -- AN UNNATURAL ACT

Somehow this data about feedback seems surprising. After all, there has been a good deal of emphasis on feedback over the past 20 years, at least within the HRD profession. There have been many articles published, there are workshops on performance feedback, and there is much stress placed in management training on the more formal performance appraisal processes. Feedback had become part of every manager's tool kit -- or so it seemed anyway.

Why hasn't this turned out to be true? The answer to this question is unclear, although it is interesting to speculate. When managers are asked about the lack of feedback effectiveness, they provide certain typical responses. "There is not enough time to do it right," is one reason managers assert they don't do it. Another reason given is that the organization culture does not support people using feedback as a management tool. A third reason is given as "Good people know how they are doing,

they do not need to be told by others". An interesting response to why people do not give more positive feedback is that "it will be seen as insincere".

Comments like these are interesting, but they do not fully explain why many managers choose not to engage in the activity of giving feedback. We think there are two general reasons for that -- first, giving feedback is almost an unnatural act and, related closely to the first, most people lack the skills to give feedback effectively.

Feedback is unnatural because -- at least in the U.S. -- we have learned through our cultural upbringing some rather ineffective ways of telling others how we view their performance. When people do not perform up to our expectations, we either learn to yell at them, or scold them, or we learn to suffer in silence and complain behind their backs to others. When someone does something good, we often do not tell them because "they might get a big head" or because it would embarrass them. These cultural patterns, learned in childhood, stick with us as adults, and form the basis for ineffective feedback patterns in organizations.

As a corollary to this "unnaturalness", most people do not have the skills to give feedback to others effectively. As indicated above, feedback skills are not culturally natural; in fact, bad feedback habits are drilled into our consciousness. Effective feedback skills are not normally learned in college or business school, and although many management training events include some training in the feedback area, it appears that it is not sufficient to result in changed behavior in this area.

In addition to giving feedback, we have noticed that most people are not good at receiving feedback. People often get defensive and try to "explain" away the reasons behind their actions. They do not listen well, or attack the messenger. All of these responses are likely to result in the giver being less likely to take the time to give people feedback in the future.

This situation can be changed by trying to modify AID's cultural climate around feedback. We have adapted and developed some guidelines for giving and receiving feedback which have been tested and changed over the last three years with a wide variety of managers. These guidelines are simple and practical, and they work.

GUIDELINES FOR GIVING FEEDBACK

The "giving feedback" guidelines have been adapted from some original ones published by NTL many years ago. Because the original NTL feedback guidelines appeared to be aimed more at maximizing the use of feedback in personal growth groups or in other non-organizational settings, some changes and additions have had to be made to them so they would fit organizational contexts.

These changes evolved as a result of years of work with real managers and individual contributors who were trying to improve their use of feedback in their own organizations. We have coached and listened to managers in those

situations, and we have revised and refined the guidelines to the point where they are extremely effective for use within organizations.

Before we turn to the guidelines, there are some important principles that need to be recalled. "Feedback" is a way of helping another person understand the impact of his or her behavior on others. It helps an individual keep his or her behavior "on target" and thus better achieves his or her goals. Feedback can be positive (some assume it is only the "bad news") or negative, or both.

Feedback is more effective when the following criteria are used:

1. Make specific statements; support general statements with specific examples. Specificity provides to the receiver an exactness which is valuable for both positive behavior ("exactly what did I do right" or "what should I be sure to continue doing") and negative behavior ("what precisely should I change).

   To be told that "you did well on that project" may be satisfying to both parties, but it is not nearly as effective as saying "you came in on time and under budget on that project". The latter statement makes it clear exactly what the feedback giver sees as positive in the receiver's performance. To be told that "you dominate meetings" will probably not be useful unless it is followed up by specifics. "For example, yesterday when we were in the personnel meeting trying to decide whether or not to hire Pat, you talked so much I stopped listening; you may have said good things later in the meeting, but I did not hear them."

2. Use descriptive rather than judgmental language. By avoiding judgmental language, it reduces the need for the individual to respond defensively. For example, regardless of merit, saying that some action was "terrible" or "stupid" or "utterly inappropriate" generally evokes anger, return accusations or passive-aggressive behavior in the listener. The feedback message rarely gets through this kind of communicative clutter.

   On the other hand, describing one person's impact on the performance of another makes it easier for the receiver to understand the meaning and importance of the feedback. Also, it tends to focus the discussion on behavior and not personal characteristics. People are more open to listening about the results of their behavior than they are about the worth of their person. An example is the following: "When you get angry and use abrasive language, it causes me not to want to tell you the truth -- so I just tell you what I think you want to hear". In this example, the results of the person's behavior are made clear.

3. It is direct, clear and to the point. No matter how well motivated one might be, certain actions -- "beating around the bush", using lots of modifiers, talking in general terms in hopes that the person will "get the message" -- create misunderstanding and discomfort. The point is to communicate directly, not leave someone guessing.

4. It is directed toward behavior which the receiver can do something about. Frustration is only increased when a person is reminded of shortcoming over which he or she has no control.

5. It is solicited rather than imposed. Feedback is most useful when the receiver asks for feedback in specific areas. This is an ideal that is not always possible to achieve in organizations. If someone's performance is having negative impact, then it is the responsibility of others to provide feedback. The best thing possible is to create an environment within which people feel comfortable soliciting feedback, since that does indeed increase its effectiveness.

6. It is well-timed. In general, feedback is most useful at the earliest opportunity after the given behavior (depending, of course, on the person's readiness to hear it, support available from others, etc.). We are talking here about reasonable time periods -- the same day, a day later, within a week, maybe even within a month.

   However, when it goes longer than a month, people generally end up arguing about history, about what really happened. Moreover, badly timed feedback also lends itself to the comment, "well, if that was so important, then why did you wait all this time to tell me". Feedback given in small pieces -- "chewable chunks" -- in a timely manner is much easier and more effective than saving things up for the "right time". The more natural and ongoing the process is, the better it will be for all.

7. It takes into account the needs of both the receiver and giver of feedback. Feedback can be destructive when it serves only one's own needs and fails to consider the needs of the person on the receiving end. This is especially true when the giver is angry and wants to "unload" on the receiver. There may be a certain psychological satisfaction for one of the parties in this instance, but it generally results in ineffective feedback and a strained relationship.

8. It is well-planned. It takes time to plan for a feedback conference -- what to say, in what order, how much -- all need careful thought. If, however, feedback is given on a more regular basis, then feedback conferences will be much easier.

HELPING OTHERS GIVE FEEDBACK

Feedback from another person is one important source of data which helps tell how one person's actions are affecting others. Even if one "disagrees" with the feedback, it is important to hear it clearly and understand it.

Feedback tells one person how another person sees his or her actions and gives one the choice of trying to change behavior. People act on their perceptions of another's actions; one may be coming across in unintended ways, and not know it. Feedback gives one knowledge of one's impact on others; such knowledge is invaluable for individual performance in

organizations. There is probably nothing worse than being ineffective in ways that are clear to others but not clear or available to the individual. As such, people who are interested in enhancing their performance should do everything possible to make it easier for others to give them feedback.

Yet, giving feedback is sometimes difficult; it is especially difficult if one is trying to get feedback from a subordinate. The following guidelines make it easier for others to give useful feedback. Keep in mind that these guidelines are meant to be used for both positive and negative feedback. It is often as hard (or harder) for people to hear positive feedback as it is for them to hear negative feedback.

1. Solicit feedback in clear and specific areas. It is always easier to give feedback if one is asked. It is made even easier when a specific question is asked -- "Could you let me know what you think of my current speed and quality of turning out widgets?" Ask clarifying questions in order to understand the feedback.

2. Wait until the feedback has been given, then paraphrase the major points. This piece of active listening helps insure that real understanding has happened. It also helps the giver know that the receiver is indeed interested and trying hard to understand.

   Make it your goal to understand the feedback — asking clarifying questions and paraphrasing are two ways to do this.

3. Help the giver use the criteria for giving useful feedback. For example, if the feedback is too general, one asks "Could you give me a specific example of what you mean?".

4. Avoid making it more difficult for the giver of feedback than it already is. Reacting defensively or angrily, or arguing with negative feedback, or saying, "oh it was nothing, anyone could have done as well" in response to positive feedback are all ways of turning off the feedback spigot.

5. Avoid explanations of "why I did that," unless asked. This particular guideline is perhaps the most important one, yet it is the one that most people have trouble with. "Why not tell them", they ask, "so they can understand your reasons?" Unfortunately, in almost all cases, explaining one's actions comes across as being defensive and often ends up in an argument. This then results in the giver beginning to back off, think "hey, this simply is not worth the trouble", and will discourage the person from trying to provide effective feedback in the future. This will not discourage the person from seeing negative behavior or assessing another person's performance; it simply means the person will not provide feedback.

   Even when asked, explanations should be given reluctantly. Often explanations "muddy the waters" and take the emphasis away from understanding the behavior and its impact. If one person has just interrupted another person 5 times in a short time period, the reasons

164

for the interrupter's behavior are not very important (unless the person is undergoing some kind of medical attack); the impact on the other person and on performance is what matters.

6. Show appreciation for the effort it took for the other person to give you feedback. Saying "thank you" or "I am grateful for the effort you took to tell me" is a c[illegible] message that one appreciates receiving feedback, whether or not agreement is reached. This action invites feedback in the future. In some ways, feedback is like a gift, because one has to care enough to give it; if the signals are wrong, one simply will not provide the "gift".

7. With key points, the receiver should say what he or she intends to do as a result of the feedback. This may be "thanks, I need to think about it" or "Let me check it out with others" or "That makes sense, I"ll try in the future to.....". If one just listens -- even politely -- and walks away, it may give a message that the receiver does not take what the giver said very seriously (of course, that is the case in some instances!).

8. Remember that feedback is one person's perceptions of another's actions, not universal truth. Keeping this in mind helps one be less defensive about feedback. Check it out with others to determine the presence of patterns of behavior. If two or three people provide similiar feedback, there may be a pattern reflected which needs to be considered.

These guidelines for giving and receiving feedback work. If all people in a particular work setting understand and use the guidelines, the feedback will be extremely useful and become an integral part of the every day work situation. The more people that are skilled in giving feedback at whatever levels, the better. That is, of course, why we recommend that the guidelines be "installed" on a system wide basis. If, however, even one person in a feedback situation uses the guidelines, the effectiveness of the feedback will still be very high.

It is vital for general managers to understand that increasing the level of feedback skills within organizations enhances performance and produces better results. We are not stressing the importance of feedback because it is "nice to do" or because it will make the workplace more humane -- although it indeed may have those effects. Getting people to talk with each other routinely about performance in a more acceptable, clear and precise way simply increases work output.

If people learn how they are doing from different sources (in addition to themselves), they will work to correct their deficiencies and capitalize on their strengths. Everyone will reduce the amount of unproductive time they spend complaining to others about the performance of a third party. Individuals will feel that organizational managers value high quality performance and communicate about it in ways that give everyone a chance to perform at their optimum levels. Everyone wins.

This, of course, sounds easier than it is. Practically speaking, how can you as a manager increase feedback skills within your office or Mission?

MAKING FEEDBACK A MORE EFFECTIVE TOOL IN YOUR MISSION OR OFFICE

You can begin by finding the others in your office who have attended either the Senior Management Course or the Management Skills Course. Get them together, and discuss how you might work towards improving the use of feedback with everyone in the office or Mission. Work to support each other as role models to implement this change. There are several specific actions that can be taken:

- As a manager, you can publish the feedback guidelines throughout your Mission or office at all levels so that everybody is aware of the "rules of the game". This will also indicate that feedback is a two way process, and that everybody bears responsibility for the success or failure of the feedback process. It establishes standards for everyday talk about performance to which all have access.

- You can run (or arrange for) focused training sessions so people can get practice at both giving and receiving feedback. Everyone should be included in the sessions. They can be short (2 or 3 hours) and be totally skill focused. A trainer or skilled manager can explain the guidelines and perhaps model an effective feedback conversation. Then, people can be divided into groups of three to practice giving and receiving feedback given typical situations that might exist in the Agency or your Mission or office. The third person is an observer, and gives feedback about how well the guidelines are followed.

  This is much the same structure that is used currently in both the AID Senior Management Course and Management Skills Course. For practice, the cases used during those courses could also be used.

- Once everyone is reasonably clear about the guidelines, you as a manager should than reinforce the act of giving feedback. People should be encouraged to try, even if they feel they will not get it "exactly right". After all, if it is not exactly correct, the receiver can ask questions which will get the conversation back on target.

- You can serve as a role model for using feedback effectively. As a manager who understands and uses the guidelines serves .

- Take some time to give unsolicited, "no-strings-attached", clear, specific positive feedback. This will have a powerful impact on people. It will also help set a clear and well-listened to example of how to give feedback.

166

- In terms of receiving feedback, you can make a visible contribution by asking for it, and expressing appreciation when it is received.

Each one of these suggestions for action are seemingly small; yet they will add up to create incremental -- but significant — change. This will have the effect of changing the norms about feedback in your Mission or Office (and eventually within the Agency). Since everybody "knows the rules", they can help one another be effective with feedback.

This will make feedback more a part of everyday life. As was mentioned early, the impact of feedback is optimized when it a normal, routine part of the work environment. If it is rarely given, or only given at EER time, feedback becomes strained and imbued with a sense of trauma which makes it almost impossible to do well. When given in small, "chewable chunks" in a timely fashion, it is much easier to do and much more effective.

THE MOTIVATING POWER OF AUTHENTIC POSITIVE FEEDBACK

There is one aspect of feedback that deserves a special note. Positive feedback by itself, when authentic, is a supurb tool to motivate people. And it is a tool that is grossly underused. People do not provide sufficient positive feedback; it is often used to soften the blow of negative feedback, as a way to pave the way for the "bad news". Organizational life has conditioned us to see positive feedback that way. Yet, when no-strings-attached positive feedback is given, the results are immediately clear.

In one of our management seminars, there is an exercise where we ask everybody -- after they have been working together intensively in small teams for a sufficent time period -- to go around the table and give everyone positive feedback. No negative feedback allowed. After much nervousness and laughter, people begin to give each other positive feedback. Even grizzled veterans with 30 years of organizational experience begin to participate (some almost develop a hernia). Immediately, the sound level in the room goes up, the energy level increases noticeably, and the teams become very focused. When asked how that exercise was, people invariably comment by saying "wonderful" or "energizing" or "it really charged me up to get on with the work".

There is much that goes on every day that is positive. We all should make it a point to give one or two people some positive feedback each day, without any negative feedback attached to it. That is not to say we should ignore the negative; rather it is to point out that a great number of positive things often get no communicative notice. Or we develop a communication pattern wherein we only give positive feedback as a precursor to the "other shoe falling".

Yet, in an age when we are trying to locate the magic formula of motivation, the power that communicating positive feedback has for motivating people is manifest. It is simple to do, and it does not cost anything. It is a waste not to use it.

CONFLICT RESOLUTION

1. "The Art of Creative Fighting" by H.B. Karp, from the *1983 Annual for Facilitators, Trainer* and *Consultants.* (required)

THE ART OF CREATIVE FIGHTING

H.B. Karp

Whether the particular setting is the family, the small group, the agency, or the business unit, training individuals to deal effectively with conflict requires a great deal of skill and awareness on the part of the facilitator. When training is unsuccessful in other areas of human resource development, such as communication, problem solving, or motivation, the worst that usually happens is that the situation does not improve with time; in other words, communication remains ineffective, problems are not solved, or productivity fails to increase. In dealing with conflict, however, the situation is quite different. A training error or an inappropriate intervention can make the situation immediately more risky and volatile than it was previously. It also becomes less likely that a positive outcome will emerge.

Several elements contribute to making conflict training such a touchy area:

- The topic itself has a strong tendency to initiate deep feelings on the part of most participants and some facilitators. Most people either do not like conflict or are afraid of it even before they deal with it.
- Training in conflict management is not just a matter of cognitive understanding of relevant theory and technique. Facilitators must be comfortable with conflict and their own unique approaches to dealing with it *before* they can assist others in this regard.
- Despite disclaimers to the contrary, there appears to be a highly preferred, "one-best way" to deal with conflict from the viewpoint of human resource development: collaboration. Facilitators work effectively with people in developing collaborative approaches to conflict issues, but they often ignore or avoid other approaches in the process. This tendency has the effect of limiting alternatives and can lead to an impasse. In fact, such a unidirectional approach may increase rather than lessen the fear of conflict. Although collaboration may be the most preferable method for dealing with conflict, on some occasions a collaborative solution simply is not available.

A pragmatic view of training in the area of conflict indicates that the first essential step is to help people to see the simplest and most basic aspects of conflict, thereby stripping it of its mystic and awesome nature. Conflict certainly demands respect, but it need not generate fear and wonder. The second essential step is to legitimize the *process* of conflict. The most valuable skill needed in handling a conflict is not the ability to get along well; it is the ability to fight well. The time to get along well is after the fight is over. Indeed, when people are able to fight fully and creatively, it is probable that they will get along better after the resolution than they did before the conflict arose.

THE NATURE OF CONFLICT

Conflict occurs when two or more people attempt to occupy the same space at the same time. This space can be physical, psychological, intimate, political, or any arena in which there is room for only one view, outcome, or individual. Whether cast in the home or the work setting, conflict is absolutely unavoidable as a normal condition of active life. In addition, it is neither good nor bad in itself; it simply is. Whether the outcome of a conflict situation is positive or

negative is almost totally determined by the way in which it is managed. When managed effectively, conflict actually becomes a vital asset in that it is a prime source of energy and creativity in a system.

The four major categories of areas in which conflict arises are described as follows, in descending order of the objectivity involved.

1. *Fact.* Conflict over fact is the most frequent variety, the most objective in nature, the least volatile, and by far the easiest to resolve. This type of conflict centers on *what a thing is or is not.* Resolution is usually achieved by comparing the object of the conflict to a standard or by referring to a mutually acceptable authority. For example, if one person believes that a specific object is a hammer and another believes it to be an axe, resolution is simple to achieve: Obtain a picture of each and hold them next to the object in question.

2. *Method.* Conflict over method is a little more subjective and volatile than conflict over fact. Those involved disagree about a procedure and are in conflict over *what is to be done.* Although personal opinion enters into the process, the conflict can be managed objectively for the most part. For example, a conflict about how to conduct a sales campaign can be resolved most easily by achieving mutual agreement on market conditions, advertising capabilities, budget constraints, and so forth.

3. *Objectives.* Conflict over objectives is more subjective and has a greater potential for volatility than the two types previously discussed. It concerns *what is to be accomplished* and is harder fought due to the fact that it incorporates higher degrees of personal commitment and risk, in terms of both personal and organizational variables. For example, "what is best for the company," such as the next project, is often intertwined with "what is best for me," such as the next promotion. Critical to managing this type of conflict is the recognition that the subjective elements involved are as legitimate as the objective elements.

4. *Values.* Conflict over values is almost totally subjective in nature and is, therefore, the most volatile type. It pertains to *what is right or wrong.* Mismanaged conflicts over values can result in divorces and even wars. The basic strategy in dealing with such a conflict is to avoid it if at all possible. If it is unavoidable, the best tactic is to objectify the issue as much as possible, dealing with behaviors or events that arise from the value rather than dealing with the value itself. For example, a heated argument over the morality of capital punishment has a high probability of ending in nothing but rage, self-righteousness, and moral indignation. However, a discussion of capital punishment in terms of its deterrent effects and legal ramifications has a somewhat better chance of resulting in agreement and resolution.

STRATEGIES FOR MANAGING CONFLICT

The three basic strategies that are used to manage conflict are described in the following paragraphs. These strategies concern the way in which the conflict is resolved rather than the way in which it is conducted.

1. *Competition* is known as the "win/lose" approach to conflict; people compete to see who wins, and the winner takes all. The most obvious example of the competitive approach to conflict is an athletic event.

2. *Compromise* is a "lose/lose" approach. All parties agree to sacrifice equal portions of what they want. Subsequently, another mutual cut may be established and another until everyone settles for very little of what he or she originally wanted. An illustration of the result of conflict that is dealt with through compromise is the comparison between the wording of a bill in the House of Representatives prior to its first committee hearing and the final wording when that bill is enacted into law.

3. *Collaboration* is called the "win/win" approach. When this strategy is employed, people agree ahead of time to work with their conflict until they come up with a unique solution that provides each of them with all or almost all of what he or she wants.

There is little question that the collaborative approach to conflict, although it is the most costly in terms of time and energy, has the highest probability of producing the most creative and highest yielding results. However, as mentioned previously, there are times when a collaborative approach is not available and the issues are too important and vital to the individuals involved even to consider compromise. Some conditions that tend to preclude collaboration are harsh time deadlines, poor interpersonal relationships between or among the conflicting parties, severely limited resources, or differing values. Under these circumstances, competition is the only means available for managing the conflict.

Frequently a conflict is first approached competitively due to disinterest in or unawareness of a collaborative alternative; then, after those involved have competed for a while, they discover a collaborative solution. If the fighting is creative and effective, there is a higher probability that this will occur, given the potential availability of a collaborative solution at the outset.

CREATIVE FIGHTING

It is often the case that people in conflict are unwilling to engage each other powerfully simply because they do not possess the basic skills required for effective fighting. Paradoxically, once an individual has acquired these skills and is comfortable with them, it is much less likely that he or she will have to use them. The newly acquired knowledge and abilities produce a clear confidence that is observable to others, thereby making the individual less subject to unilateral attacks. On the other hand, if a fight becomes unavoidable, he or she can handle it.

Anger is as appropriate and productive a reaction to events as is any other human response. It is as unavoidably reflexive a response to being frustrated as laughter is to being amused. The issue involved is not whether it is appropriate to feel anger when frustrated, but rather how to deal with anger appropriately when it occurs. People must be made aware that there are techniques of fighting that can be learned and used skillfully. Also, they must be given the opportunity to practice these techniques in a neutral, low-risk setting, such as a training workshop. When all parties involved in a fight have acknowledged the legitimacy of conflict, established the norms for fighting, and are confident in their own abilities and strength, they are likely to approach one another with respect. Under such circumstances, there is little threat to ongoing relationships; in fact, there is a great potential for solidifying and enhancing these relationships.

The following paragraphs describe ten guidelines for the process of preparing people to fight creatively.

Establish the Legitimacy of Fighting

Fighting must be seen as a natural and sometimes appropriate thing to do. Occasionally it is even fun, as long as all parties agree to do it. Above all, fighting must not be viewed as an activity to be avoided at all costs. Whenever two or more people are working or living together, conflicts of interest arise. Sometimes these conflicts can be resolved through peaceful negotiation or willing compliance; sometimes they cannot. When the latter condition exists, fighting is the ultimate and appropriate response, unless one or more of the parties disempower themselves and give in because of fear of confrontation.

As stated previously, when fighting is approached creatively, it has several positive aspects that should be recognized: It is energizing; it honors all of its participants; it frequently produces

the best solution under the circumstances; it strengthens, rather than weakens, relationships; and the arena in which it occurs becomes a safer, more "human" place in which to live and work. When fighting is not engaged in creatively, personal relationships deteriorate and become characterized by spite, sniping, silent vows of vengeance, sulking, self-pity, and complaints about being misunderstood.

Deal with One Issue at a Time

In an ongoing relationship, unfinished business frequently co-exists with the current source of contention. The temptation when fighting is to bring up unresolved arguments from the past and catch an opponent off guard. When this ploy is successful, the person who initiated it achieves the upper hand and places the opponent on the defensive; the parties involved start a different fight that bears no relevance to the present conflict, and both (or all) of them become vulnerable to attack in this fashion.

Therefore, it is important for those in conflict to maintain a focus on the point of contention. When one person confronts another with an unrelated issue, the individual who is attacked should not respond except to say "That's not what we're dealing with at the moment." Subsequently, the parties may agree to discuss the secondary issue at some time in the future.

Occasionally, during the course of a fight, it becomes obvious that a secondary issue from the past is actually blocking the resolution of the issue at hand. For example, one person might say to another, "The last time you asked me for support and I helped you, you refused to acknowledge my contribution in the final report." When such a situation arises, the current issue should be set aside until closure of the unfinished issue is achieved, at which point the original fight can be continued with greater energy and a higher probability of a successful outcome. The important point is that only one issue should be addressed at a time.

Choose the Arena Carefully

Just because one person is angry with another and wants to fight does not automatically mean that the second party is ready or willing to oblige. Too often, one of the parties is dragged into "the combat zone" when totally unprepared or disinterested, and this situation frequently creates further unnecessary defensiveness, resentment, and personal animosity. To prevent such a development, all parties involved must understand and agree that if one person does not want to fight at a particular moment, no fight takes place at that time. There are three basic responses to consider when a fight is impending.

1. *Engage.* If the timing is right and the point is legitimate, the sooner it is brought into the open and dealt with creatively, the better. The usual outcome of avoiding a fight is that the longer it stays internalized, the higher the probability that it will fester and become more interpersonally volatile.

2. *Accede.* If an issue is important to one party but not to another, the person who feels it to be unimportant may accede to the point. Before engaging in a fight, everyone involved should determine whether the issue is worth his or her time and effort. It makes little sense to pursue a goal that is of no personal consequence. One benefit of this response is that it transforms an opponent into an ally. Another positive aspect is that the individual who consciously chooses to accede to another's wishes experiences no loss of power.

3. *Postpone.* If a person is prematurely engaged in a conflict, he or she may choose to acknowledge the issue and then put it aside. This approach involves listening to what the other person says, acknowledging an understanding of the point being made and its importance, and setting a time for assembling everyone involved and dealing with the issue. This response has a

tendency not only to defuse the issue for the individual who brought it up, but also to prevent its escalation. In addition, postponing a fight allows time to consider the issue fully and to develop appropriate tactics.

The individual who initiates a confrontation and is met with postponing as a response must remember that an opponent should never be forced to fight before he or she is ready. Agreeing to the postponement can be advantageous in that a fully prepared opponent is less likely to overreact or to wage unwarranted counterattacks than is an opponent who is caught off guard.

Avoid Reacting to Unintentional Remarks

Frequently, in the heat of battle, things are said that are regretted an instant later. This is particularly true if the issue at hand is of deep, personal significance to one or both of the parties; if ego involvement is high; or if the relationship is an important one. A related consideration is the fact that often people do not know precisely what they feel or think until they hear themselves verbalizing these feelings or thoughts.

An important aspect of creative fighting is to establish the norm that when unexpected or unintentional comments are made, none of the parties involved will respond by escalating the fight into a more volatile stage that no one wants. Instead, the preferred tactic should be to stop the conversation when a questionable comment is made and determine whether the comment accurately conveys what the speaker meant. If the speaker disavows the comment, everyone—including the speaker—should ignore it; if he or she confirms it, a deeper point of contention may have arisen. In the latter case, those involved in the fight must then decide which issue to focus on.

Avoid Resolutions That Come Too Soon or Too Easily

Newly married couples are often told, "Never let the sun set on an argument." However, this advice may be too simplistic. When a fight is resolved too quickly or a simple but incomplete resolution is agreed to, there are several negative side effects that are usually more painful and damaging in the long run than the original fight itself.

For example, if a fight ends prematurely, its unfinished elements do not go away; they are temporarily repressed and will almost certainly manifest themselves later. Also, the easiest solution is not always the best one in that it tends to treat symptoms and thereby obscure the real problem. Still another negative effect is that if the solution is complete for one party but not for another, the person who feels unsatisfied is not emotionally free to enter into future fights with total enthusiasm. This last effect, although very subtle, can seriously damage the relationship(s) involved.

Each fight has its own, unique level of intensity. Some fights involve simple disagreements and are resolvable "by sundown," whereas those that involve intense feelings, deep-seated values, or complex issues require much more time to be dealt with effectively. With each fight, it is essential that the parties recognize and remain aware of the time element.

There are two ways to approach the handling of time. The first is to recognize clearly and specifically the complexity and importance of the issue and then to agree to devote as much time as required to achieve a resolution. The second approach, known as "bracketing," is also quite useful, particularly when complex, interdependent relationships are involved and the issue at hand is complicated. Many times, reality dictates that even though a fight is taking place, everyday life must go on. When this is the case, it is appropriate to fight for the length of time available; "bracket" the fight by setting it aside completely, but on a temporary basis; devote energies to other concerns as necessary; and resume the fight when possible. In many instances,

this approach allows adversaries to work together well and energetically in areas that are not affected by the fight; the harmonious functioning is possible because the point of contention, although "on hold," is still actively being honored by the adversaries.

Avoid Name Calling

The function of creative fighting is to manage conflict in such a way that the following outcomes are ensured.

- An effective resolution is found;
- Everyone involved maintains a clear sense of personal dignity throughout; and
- The relationship(s) is (are) in no way damaged.

Nothing blocks these outcomes more effectively than resorting to name calling.

Creative fighting is unlike many other approaches to conflict in which the participants devote their efforts to injuring their opponents as much as possible; instead, when fighting creatively, each participant strives to achieve a specific objective. In most cases these individual objectives are mutually exclusive so that a clear choice must be made as to which will constitute the final outcome. When accomplishing a specific objective is a person's reason for fighting, it is very much in that individual's best interest not to dehumanize the opponent(s).

Name calling usually occurs when logical arguments fail or when one or more of the parties have become frustrated beyond tolerance. In order to avoid name calling, the safest and most productive stance to maintain throughout the fight is to speak strictly for oneself. When everyone invariably speaks only in terms of what he or she wants, feels, or thinks, there is little risk that anyone will be personally offended; consequently, there is little risk that the fight will escalate to a more volatile and unmanageable level.

Avoid Cornering an Opponent

Occasionally, being "right" and devastating one's opponent may be more personally satisfying than achieving the best resolution possible. However, this approach produces only momentary satisfaction and can be very costly. The practice of cornering and devastating an opponent may preclude a solid resolution. Also, the party who is the object of such an attack may eventually retaliate in kind.

One important aspect of conflict is that, regardless of the point of contention, the longer the fight goes on or the greater the intensity, the higher the ego involvement and the greater the need to save face. Everyone involved should keep this in mind and make it as easy as possible to accommodate one another's wishes. Above all, opponents must be allowed to save face. For example, if it is obvious to everyone that an opponent cannot win a particular argument, it is best to let that opponent retire gracefully. The adversary who allows such a retreat not only achieves what he or she wants, but also accords the opponent the respect that is deserved. Thus, this stance usually results in some degree of appreciation on the part of the vanquished opponent, particularly when all parties realize that pain and humiliation could have been inflicted had the party with the upper hand chosen to do so.

Agree To Disagree

Creative fighting demands the generation of alternatives and a conscious choice of one of these alternatives. Although a mutually acceptable resolution is always the desired outcome, sometimes the reality is that such a resolution is not available. In a fight in which the point of contention is basically impersonal, such as an argument over a fact or a method, a mutually acceptable resolution is almost always available. However, in a fight that is waged over a deeper,

more personal issue, such as an objective or a value, mutuality is much more difficult and sometimes impossible to achieve. In the latter case, each viewpoint is so innately a part of the individual who holds it that any attempt to minimize its validity will be taken as an attack on the individual personally. Thus, it is almost impossible for someone involved in such a fight to concede a point without feeling personally diminished in the process.

As mentioned previously, the best and most obvious choice in dealing with arguments of a personal nature is to avoid them completely, if at all possible. Sometimes, however, a discussion about one point reveals a more intense point that is really what is at issue. As soon as it becomes evident that the parties involved are diametrically opposed on a deeply personal issue, there is little or no chance that anything can be said to alter the situation. In fact, the longer the confrontation continues, the higher the probability that each party will become more firmly entrenched in his or her position. Thus, the parties should simply agree to disagree and drop the subject for the moment. Once everyone agrees that it is perfectly acceptable to see things differently and that no attempts at conversion will be made, the subject is much safer to discuss in the future should it arise again. In the meantime, all parties can live or work together productively, because the point of difference can be side-stepped.

It is highly improbable that people involved in a long-term work or personal relationship will share all core values. Not to recognize this fact invites unnecessary squabbling. Although there seems to be constant pressure in interdependent relationships to locate common ground, it may be just as important to isolate irreconcilable differences and acknowledge them as being equally natural and "human."

In some rare instances in which a relationship between two people is extremely interdependent and long term, the parties may hold such polarized values that when one pursues his or her value, the pursuance automatically creates pain or severe problems for the other. Some examples of this type of polarization are the need for autonomy versus the need for participation, the need for isolation versus the need for intimacy, and concern with production versus concern for people. When the situation is so extreme that any concession on the part of either person will result in a loss of self-respect, the following procedure should be considered.

1. *Accept the polarity.* The two parties involved must establish the norm that both have a right to their viewpoints, but that neither is required to like the opposite viewpoint.

2. *Establish the importance of the relationship.* The parties should determine all of the positive, productive aspects of the relationship. It is preferable that they complete this task together rather than separately. They must review the basic values that they hold in common as well as their past successes in the relationship. During this process, enjoyable times and instances of mutual support should be recalled, and the potential for similar occurrences in the future should be accepted. In addition, the interdependent nature of the relationship should be acknowledged and defined.

It is important to note, however, that this step might reveal the possibility that the two parties do not have a solid relationship and that permanent disengagement may be the most realistic, mutually benefical resolution.

3. *Stay with the fight to the end.* If the parties determine that the relationship is important and worth saving, they must agree to endure the fight. However, neither should acquiesce only to please the other person or to reduce the other's pain; both should be appreciative of attempts to please, but they should not accept concessions that are made strictly for this purpose. If they have evaluated their relationship correctly, they will find ways to continue to work together productively, even though they are both experiencing some degree of pain. Both parties must remember that although they seriously disagree on a specific issue, they do not disagree on all others.

Working or living with someone under these conditions represents an incredibly heavy burden for both parties. Sooner or later, only because of exhaustion, it is probable that they will mutually agree to "let go" of the troublesome issue. More to the point, as the exhaustion increases, so does the importance of other issues, and the originally polarized viewpoints tend to become modified. When this happens, it may be possible to achieve a resolution.

Focus on What Is Wanted Rather Than Why It Is Wanted

Almost all fights, creative or otherwise, arise from the fact that the participants want different things. Also, in many cases compliance from the opponent(s) is necessary for the attainment of each person's objective. Thus, it is essential to establish clearly what each party wants and how these objectives differ. On the other hand, spending time and energy exploring *why* each party wants what he or she wants is, at best, a total waste of time and, at worst, an invitation to a psychological melee.

The point to remember is that people have a right to want what they want and to want all of it. This point has tremendous impact on creative fighting. When participants answer opponents' inquiries as to why they want specific objectives, they become "defendants" and the opponents become "judges" who can rule on the worthiness of the reasons supplied. These reasons, once verbalized, are usually anything but convincing. The reality is that very few people know exactly why they want what they want. In fact, most are not too concerned with their own motivation in this regard; for them, it is simply enough that they want.

In addition, the answer to the first "why?" usually leads to another "why?" and still another, and each time the defendant is forced to stray farther from the original objective to provide an answer. Eventually, the issue that generated the fight becomes obscured. The roles may even be reversed; the defendant may become the judge and counter with questions of his or her own. Thus, all parties are compelled to defend themselves, and as a result the fight may escalate.

Therefore, the best strategy is to avoid asking and answering queries about motivation. Instead, each person should concentrate on accomplishing his or her specific goal.

Maintain a Sense of Humor

Fighting is most often viewed as a grim and serious business. In many cases, of course, it is quite serious and certainly deserves to be respected. However, even when the subject of the fight is important and tempers are aroused, it is important that the participants not lose their perspectives. The best way to retain one's perspective during a fight is to exercise a sense of humor. For example, a married couple may be arguing vehemently about finances when suddenly the husband exclaims, "Not only *that*, but you never really liked my mother!" At such moments, it is perfectly legitimate to recognize the humor of the situation and respond accordingly. In fact, the parties involved may be unable to control their laughter and subsequently may find that the fight has disintegrated. Although the tendency when engaged in a fight is to become more "righteous" as the confrontation progresses, the participants would do well to remember that it is the fight that should be taken seriously—not themselves.

SUMMARY

Training people to deal with conflict in an effective manner requires much of a facilitator. Participants must be taught that conflict is a natural part of life and that dealing with it creatively can actually enhance rather than destroy relationships.

Part of the facilitator's responsibility is to help the participants to see that there are four

different sources of conflict—fact, method, objectives, and values—and that each source represents a different level of volatility. In addition, the three basic strategies for handling conflict—competition, compromise, and collaboration—should be presented and explained, and the facilitator should take care not to convey an exclusive prejudice in favor of collaboration.

When all participants are aware of the basic aspects of conflict, they should be allowed to practice fighting creatively in a relatively nonthreatening environment, such as a workshop. As they practice, the facilitator should help them to adhere to the ten guidelines that are detailed in this paper.

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TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

1. "Definitions and Characteristics of High Performing Systems, unpublished paper by Peter B. Vaill. (required)

2. "How to Run a Meeting," by Antony Jay. *Harvard Business Review,* March-April, 1976 (required)

3. Chapter 7, "Synergy In Team Management," from *Managing Cultural Differences,* by Philip R. Harris and Robert T. Moran. (optional)

4. "What Comes After the Management Skills Course?," adapted from an article from the second AID Management Skills Course newsletter.

DEFINITIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF HIGH PERFORMING SYSTEMS

Peter B. Vaill
George Washington University

An "excellent human system" - a high performing system presents one at the outset with a profound conceptual problem: how does one define excellent? Your "high performing system" might be my "case of the compulsive pursuit of a socially useless objective".*** Or vice versa. There is no real escape from this problem, for how we define "performance" and "excellence" depend on values. As working rules of thumb, I have treated as high performing systems those organizations or groups which meet one or more of the following criteria:

1. They are performing excellently against a known external standard. The cleanest example is a team which does more of something in a given time period, or does a set amount faster, than it is usually done, or than it is done by the team's competitors.

2. They are performing excellently against what is assumed to be their potential level of performance.

3. They are performing excellently relative to where they were at some earlier point in time, i.e., a developmental criterion.

4. They are judged qualitatively by informed observers to be doing substantially better than other comparable systems.

5. They are doing whatever they do with significantly less resources than it is assumed are needed to do what they do.

6. They are perceived as exemplars of the <u>way</u> to do whatever they do, and thus become a source of ideas and inspiration for others, i.e., a style criterion.

7. They are perceived to fulfill at a high level the ideals of the culture within which they exist, i.e., they have "nobility".

8. They are the only organizations who have been able to do what they do <u>at all</u>, even though it might seem that what they do is not that difficult or mysterious a thing.

*** I once asked a student, who was insisting on an exact definition before she could write her term paper, "If this were a course in Botany, and the assignment was to describe a beautiful flower would you find that impossible?" This rhetorical question she did not find too helpful, although I was pleased with it.

ELEMENTS OF TEAMWORK

The items listed below are some of the key elements in achieving group teamwork. Rate the group on each of the eight items by circling the appropriate number.

A. How Clear are the Group Goals?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
No apparent goals	Goal confusion, uncertainty or conflict	Average goal clarity	Goals mostly clear	Goals very clear

B. How Much Trust and Openness in the Group?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Distrust and no openness	Little trust, some openness	Average trust and openness	Considerable trust and openness	Remarkable trust and openness

C. How Empathetic are Group Members to Each Other?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
No empathy	Little empathy	Average empathy	Considerable empathy	Remarkable empathy

D. How Much Attention is Paid To Process and Content (The Way the Group is Working?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
No attention to process or content	Little attention to process and content	Some concern with group process and content	A fair balance between content and process	Very concerned with process content

E. How are Group Leadership Needs Met?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Not met, drifting content	Leadership concentrated in one person	Some leadership sharing	Leadership functions distributed	Leadership needs met creatively

F. How are Group Decisions Made?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Unable to reach decisions	Made by a few-- or by one person	By majority vote	Attempts at integrating minority vote	Full participation and tested consensus

G. How Well are Group Resources Utilized?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
One or two contributed	Several tried to contribute but were discouraged	Average use of group resources	Group resources well used and encouraged	Group resources fully and effectively used

H. How Much Do Members Feel They Belong to the Group?

1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
Members have no sense of belonging	Members not close but some friendly relations	About average sense of belonging	Warm sense of belonging	Strong sense of belonging among members

One of the delightful things about searching for high performing systems is that one discovers a very large number of human systems which meet several of these criteria. Even though the behavioral sciences don't know it excellence is alive and well. Some such organizations are famous, glamorous, "trendy" but others are very humble and insignificant, even drab. The criteria though, lead one to discover many varieties of beauty in human relationships and many forms of striving which a "tighter" set of criteria would overlook. Whether doing serious social research or just living in the world, these criteria will introduce one to extraordinary human phenomena.

The Characteristics of High Performing Systems

Here is what I have found out about high performing systems:

1. HPSs are clear on their broad purposes and on nearer-term objectives for fulfilling these purposes. They know why they exist and what they are trying to do. Members have pictures in their heads which are strikingly congruent.

2. Commitment to these purposes is never perfunctory, although it is often expressed laconically. Motivation as usually conceived is always high. More important than energy level however, is energy focus. Motivation is "peculiar" in the literal sense of that word: "Belonging exclusively to one person or group; special; distinctive; different." (Outsiders find motivation peculiar too in the more usual sense of "weird, eccentric".) Energy is invested in particulars - in specific methods, tools, idea systems, arrangements and styles.

   In most HPSs, there will be some sense of its operation analogous to a feeling of rhythm. One of the "peculiarities" of motivation which is very important is the way members express their energy and commitment through getting into a "groove" of some kind.

3. Teamwork in HPSs is focussed on the task. Social psychology's favorite distinction between "task functions" and "group maintenance functions" tends to dissolve. Members will have discovered those aspects of system operations which require integrated actions and will have developed behaviors and attitudes which fulfill these requirements.

   Couples with the previous proposition about the focus of motivation, this means that there is usually a strong conservatism evident in the HPS. There are firm beliefs in a "right organizational form", and a noticeable amount of effort is devoted to attaining and maintaining this form. Theoretically, "form follows function", but once members have found a form that works, they cling to it.

4. Leadership in HPSs is strong and clear. It is unambivalent. There is no question of the need for initiative nor of its appropriate source (although it may not always be the same person). Leader style varies widely from HPS to HPS, but is remarkably consistent within a given HPS. Leader style is never conflicted: it does not swing between cool/warm, close/distant, demanding/laissez faire. Leaders are experienced as reliable and predictable.

5. HPSs are fertile sources of inventions and new methods within the scope of the task they have defined and within the form they have chosen. HPSs are relatively conservative about new methods and inventions which take them outside the task boundaries and structural forms they have traditionally practiced. "They do not tamper with a good thing".

6. HPSs are clearly bounded from their environments and a considerable amount of energy, particularly on the part of leaders, is usually devoted to maintaining these boundaries. Bounding occurs in terms of firm, even if unofficial, membership rules; in terms of methods (technologies) employed; in terms of times and time durations in which the system is "on"; and in terms of the spaces the system occupies when it is operating. There will be a strong consciousness of "we are different" in the HPS and these ongoing bounding efforts is one of the ways this consciousness displays itself most clearly.

7. Proposition (6) leads to another consistent finding and that is that HPSs are often seen as "a problem" by entities in their environment, even entities which have a great deal of power over them. HPSs avoid external control. They scrounge resources from the environment non-apologetically. They produce what they want by their standards, not what someone else wants. Thus, they often frustrate environmental entities, especially in bureaucratic settings. One can note continual annoyance, even fury with HPSs. People decide "they've got to be broken up". Especially when an HPS is a sub-unit of a larger organizational, it is thus a paradox: it fulfills the larger system's desires for high performance, but the price is that it is relatively unmanageable.

8. Above all, HPSs are systems which have "jelled", even though the phenomenon is very difficult to talk about. Neither mechanical nor organic metaphors are usually adequate for describing the "fit" of the various elements and practices of the system.

   Frequently the elements of an HPS, when examined one at a time, do not seem to qualify for membership; HPSs are often composed of castoffs and rejects.

   Beyond its concrete existence, the phenomenon of the HPS poses social science with a profound conceptual challenge, namely, of learning to talk about intense human interdependency in terms more descriptively accurate than either physics of biology provide.

How to run a meeting

Antony Jay

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6 Ideas for action — 76229
J.C. Delafon; Roger G. Kennedy; Roger M. Kenny

20 Public directors merit a try
Christopher D. Stone — 76210

43 How to run a meeting
Antony Jay — 76204

58 Inflation accounting—the great controversy
Richard F. Vancil — 76211

68 Making the major sale
Benson P. Shapiro and Ronald S. Posner — 76209

79 'Failure is a word I don't accept'
An interview with John H. Johnson — 76205

89 Supervision: substance and style
Saul W. Gellerman — 76203

100 Power is the great motivator
David C. McClelland and David H. Burnham — 76206

111 Affirmative Action and guilt-edged goals
Neil C. Churchill and John K. Shank — 76201

117 Why most new consumer brands fail
J. Hugh Davidson — 76202

123 Business needs a new breed of EDP manager
Richard L. Nolan — 76207

134 You can't outguess the foreign exchange market
William D. Serjass, Jr. — 76208

How to run a meeting

Antony Jay

At critical points things may go wrong, but here are ways of putting them right

Why is it that any single meeting may be a waste of time, an irritant, or a barrier to the achievement of an organization's objectives? The answer lies in the fact, as the author says, that "all sorts of human crosscurrents can sweep the discussion off course, and errors of psychology and technique on the chairman's part can defeat its purposes." This article offers guidelines on how to right things that go wrong in meetings. The discussion covers the functions of a meeting, the distinctions in size and type of meetings, ways to define the objectives, making preparations, the chairman's role, and ways to conduct a meeting that will achieve its objectives.

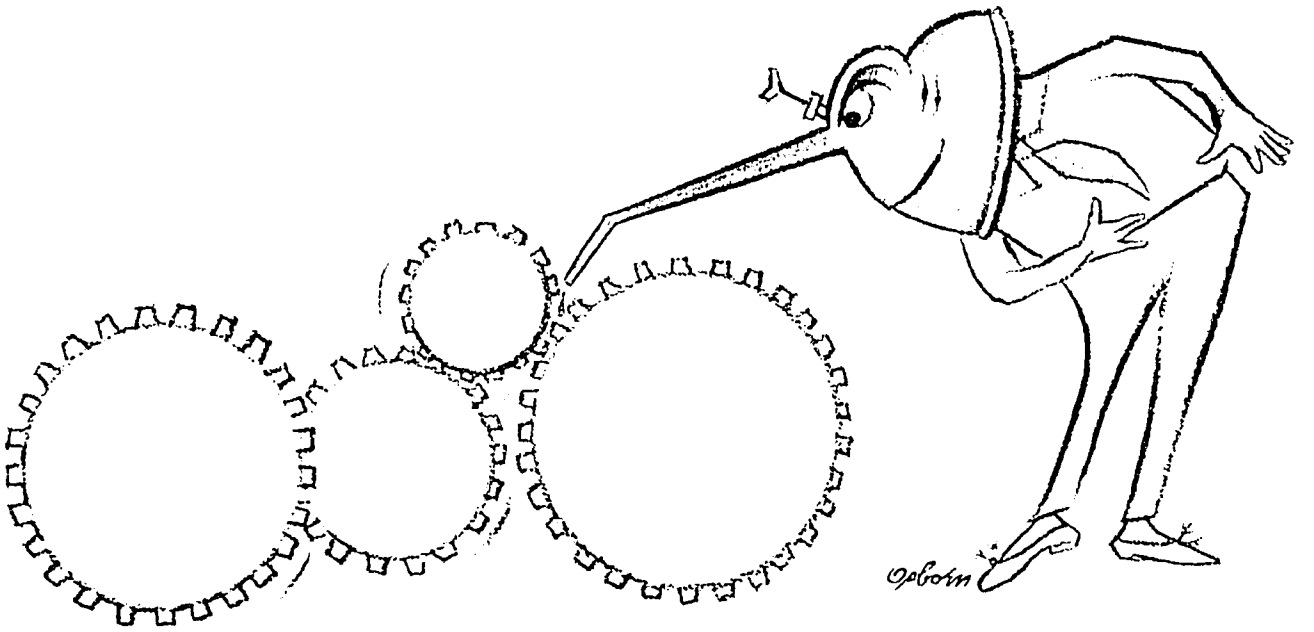
Mr. Jay is chairman of Video Arts Ltd., a London-based producer of training films for industry. Currently, the company is producing a film (featuring John Cleese of Monty Python) on the subject of meetings, and this article springs from the research Mr. Jay did for that project. He has also written many TV documentaries, such as *Royal Family*, and authored several books, including *Management and Machiavelli* (Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1968).

Drawings by Robert Osborn.

Why have a meeting anyway? Why indeed? A great many important matters are quite satisfactorily conducted by a single individual who consults nobody. A great many more are resolved by a letter, a memo, a phone call, or a simple conversation between two people. Sometimes five minutes spent with six people separately is more effective and productive than a half-hour meeting with them all together.

Certainly a great many meetings waste a great deal of everyone's time and seem to be held for historical rather than practical reasons; many long-established committees are little more than memorials to dead problems. It would probably save no end of managerial time if every committee had to discuss its own dissolution once a year, and put up a case if it felt it should continue for another twelve months. If this requirement did nothing else, it would at least refocus the minds of the committee members on their purposes and objectives.

But having said that, and granting that "referring the matter to a committee" can be a device for diluting authority, diffusing responsibility, and delaying decisions, I cannot deny that meetings fulfill a deep human need. Man is a social species. In every organization and every human culture of which we have record, people come together in small groups at regular and frequent intervals, and in larger "tribal" gatherings from time to time. If there are no meetings in the places where they work, people's attachment to the organizations they work for will be small, and they will meet in regular formal or



informal gatherings in associations, societies, teams, clubs, or pubs when work is over.

This need for meetings is clearly something more positive than just a legacy from our primitive hunting past. From time to time, some technomaniac or other comes up with a vision of the executive who never leaves his home, who controls his whole operation from an all-electronic, multichannel, microwave, fiber-optic video display dream console in his living room. But any manager who has ever had to make an organization work greets this vision with a smile that soon stretches into a yawn.

There is a world of science fiction, and a world of human reality; and those who live in the world of human reality know that it is held together by face-to-face meetings. A meeting still performs functions that will never be taken over by telephones, teleprinters, Xerox copiers, tape recorders, television monitors, or any other technological instruments of the information revolution.

Functions of a meeting

At this point, it may help us understand the meaning of meetings if we look at the six main functions that meetings will always perform better than any of the more recent communication devices:

1

In the simplest and most basic way, a meeting defines the team, the group, or the unit. Those present belong to it; those absent do not. Everyone is able to look around and perceive the whole group and sense the collective identity of which he or she forms a part. We all know who we are—whether we are on the board of Universal International, in the overseas sales department of Flexitube, Inc., a member of the school management committee, on the East Hampton football team, or in Section No. 2 of Platoon 4, Company B.

2

A meeting is the place where the group revises, updates, and adds to what it knows *as a group*. Every group creates its own pool of shared knowledge, experience, judgment, and folklore. But the pool consists only of what the individuals have experienced or discussed as a group—i.e., those things which every individual knows that all the others know, too. This pool not only helps all members to do their jobs more intelligently, but it also greatly increases the speed and efficiency of all communications among them. The group knows that all special nuances and wider implications in a brief statement will be immediately clear to its members. An enormous amount of material can be left unsaid that would have to be made explicit to an outsider.

But this pool needs constant refreshing and replenishing, and occasionally the removal of impurities. So the simple business of exchanging information and ideas that members have acquired separately or in smaller groups since the last meeting is an important contribution to the strength of the group. By questioning and commenting on new contributions, the group performs an important "digestive" process that extracts what's valuable and discards the rest.

Some ethologists call this capacity to share knowledge and experience among a group "the social mind," conceiving it as a single mind dispersed among a number of skulls. They recognize that this "social mind" has a special creative power, too. A group of people meeting together can often produce better ideas, plans, and decisions than can a single individual, or a number of individuals, each working alone. The meeting can of course also produce worse outputs or none at all, if it is a bad meeting.

However, when the combined experience, knowledge, judgment, authority, and imagination of a half dozen people are brought to bear on issues, a great many plans and decisions are improved and sometimes transformed. The original idea that one person might have come up with singly is tested, amplified, refined, and shaped by argument and discussion (which often acts on people as some sort of chemical stimulant to better performance), until it satisfies far more requirements and overcomes many more objections than it could in its original form.

3

A meeting helps every individual understand both the collective aim of the group and the way in which his own and everyone else's work can contribute to the group's success.

4

A meeting creates in all present a commitment to the decisions it makes and the objectives it pursues. Once something has been decided, even if you originally argued against it, your membership in the group entails an obligation to accept the decision. The alternative is to leave the group, but in practice this is very rarely a dilemma of significance. Real opposition to decisions within organizations usually consists of one part disagreement with the decision to nine parts resentment at not being consulted before the decision. For most people on most issues, it is enough to know that their views were heard and considered. They may regret that they were not followed, but they accept the outcome.

And just as the decision of any team is binding on all the members, so the decisions of a meeting of people higher up in an organization carry a greater authority than any decision by a single executive. It is much harder to challenge a decision of the board than of the chief executive acting on his own. The decision-making authority of a meeting is of special importance for long-term policies and procedures.

5

In the world of management, a meeting is very often the only occasion where the team or group actually exists and works as a group, and the only time when the supervisor, manager, or executive is actually perceived as the leader of the team, rather than as the official to whom individuals report. In some jobs the leader does guide his team through his personal presence—not just the leader of a pit gang or construction team, but also the chef in the hotel kitchen and the maitre d'hôtel in the restaurant, or the supervisor in a department store. But in large administrative headquarters, the daily or weekly meeting is often the only time when the leader is ever perceived to be guiding a team rather than doing a job.

6

A meeting is a status arena. It is no good to pretend that people are not or should not be concerned with their status relative to the other members in a group. It is just another part of human nature that we have to live with. It is a not insignificant fact that the word *order* means (a) hierarchy or pecking order; (b) an instruction or command; and (c) stability and the way things ought to be, as in "put your affairs in order," or "law and order." All three definitions are aspects of the same idea, which is indivisible.

Since a meeting is so often the only time when members get the chance to find out their relative standing, the "arena" function is inevitable. When a group is new, has a new leader, or is composed of people like department heads who are in competition for promotion and who do not work in a single team outside the meeting, "arena behavior" is likely to figure more largely, even to the point of dominating the proceedings. However, it will hardly signify with a long-established group that meets regularly.

Despite the fact that a meeting can perform all of the foregoing main functions, there is no guarantee that it will do so in any given situation. It is all too possible that any single meeting may be a waste of

time, an irritant, or a barrier to the achievement of the organization's objectives.

What sort of meeting?

While my purpose in this article is to show the critical points at which most meetings go wrong, and to indicate ways of putting them right, I must first draw some important distinctions in the size and type of meetings that we are dealing with.

Meetings can be graded by *size* into three broad categories: (1) the assembly—100 or more people who are expected to do little more than listen to the main speaker or speakers; (2) the council—40 or 50 people who are basically there to listen to the main speaker or speakers but who can come in with questions or comments and who may be asked to contribute something on their own account; and (3) the committee—up to 10 (or at the most 12) people, all of whom more or less speak on an equal footing under the guidance and control of a chairman.

We are concerned in this article only with the "committee" meeting, though it may be described as a committee, a subcommittee, a study group, a project team, a working party, a board, or by any of dozens of other titles. It is by far the most common meeting all over the world, and can perhaps be traced back to the primitive hunting band through which our species evolved. Beyond doubt it constitutes the bulk of the 11 million meetings that—so it has been calculated—take place every day in the United States.

Apart from the distinction of size, there are certain considerations regarding the *type* of meeting that profoundly affect its nature. For instance:

Frequency—A daily meeting is different from a weekly one, and a weekly meeting from a monthly one. Irregular, ad hoc, quarterly, and annual meetings are different again. On the whole, the frequency of meetings defines—or perhaps even determines—the degree of unity of the group.

Composition—Do the members work together on the same project, such as the nursing and ancillary staff on the same ward of a hospital? Do they work on different but parallel tasks, like a meeting of the

company's plant managers or regional sales managers? Or are they a diverse group—strangers to each other, perhaps—united only by the meeting itself and by a common interest in realizing its objectives?

Motivation—Do the members have a common objective in their work, like a football team? Or do they to some extent have a competitive working relationship, like managers of subsidiary companies at a meeting with the chief executive, or the heads of research, production, and marketing discussing finance allocation for the coming year? Or does the desire for success through the meeting itself unify them, like a neighborhood action group or a new product design committee?

Decision process—How does the meeting group ultimately reach its decisions? By a general consensus, "the feeling of the meeting"? By a majority vote? Or are the decisions left entirely to the chairman himself, after he has listened to the facts, opinions, and discussions?

Kinds of meetings

The experienced meeting-goer will recognize that, although there seem to be five quite different methods of analyzing a meeting, in practice there is a tendency for certain kinds of meetings to sort themselves out into one of three categories. Consider:

The *daily meeting*, where people work together on the same project with a common objective and reach decisions informally by general agreement.

The *weekly* or *monthly meeting*, where members work on different but parallel projects and where there is a certain competitive element and a greater likelihood that the chairman will make the final decision himself.

The *irregular, occasional*, or *"special project" meeting*, composed of people whose normal work does not bring them into contact and whose work has little or no relationship to the others'. They are united only by the project the meeting exists to promote and motivated by the desire that the project should succeed. Though actual voting is uncommon, every member effectively has a veto.

Of these three kinds of meeting, it is the first—the workface type—that is probably the most common. It is also, oddly enough, the one most likely to be successful. Operational imperatives usually ensure that it is brief, and the participants' experience of working side by side ensures that communication is good.

The other two types are a different matter. In these meetings all sorts of human crosscurrents can sweep the discussion off course, and errors of psychology and technique on the chairman's part can defeat its purposes. Moreover, these meetings are likely to bring together the more senior people and to produce decisions that profoundly affect the efficiency, prosperity, and even survival of the whole organization. It is, therefore, toward these higher-level meetings that the lessons of this article are primarily directed.

Before the meeting

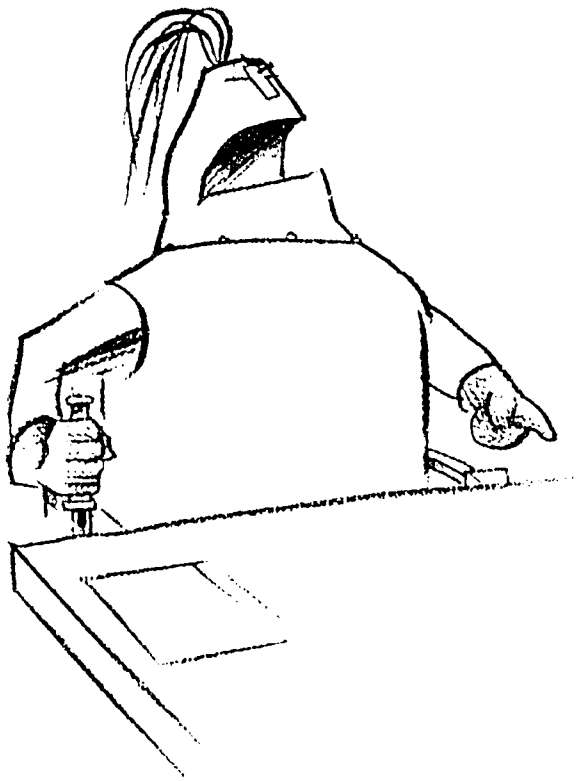
The most important question you should ask is: "What is this meeting intended to achieve?" You can ask it in different ways—"What would be the likely consequences of not holding it?" "When it is over, how shall I judge whether it was a success or a failure?"—but unless you have a very clear requirement from the meeting, there is a grave danger that it will be a waste of everyone's time.

Defining the objective

You have already looked at the six main functions that all meetings perform, but if you are trying to use a meeting to achieve definite objectives, there are in practice only certain types of objectives it can really achieve. Every item on the agenda can be placed in one of the following four categories, or divided up into sections that fall into one or more of them:

1

Informative-digestive—Obviously, it is a waste of time for the meeting to give out purely factual information that would be better circulated in a document. But if the information should be heard from a particular person, or if it needs some clarification and comment to make sense of it, or if it has deep implications for the members of the meeting, then it is perfectly proper to introduce an item onto the agenda that requires no conclusion, decision, or



action from the meeting; it is enough, simply, that the meeting should receive and discuss a report.

The "informative-digestive" function includes progress reports—to keep the group up to date on the current status of projects it is responsible for or that affect its deliberations—and review of completed projects in order to come to a collective judgment and to see what can be learned from them for the next time.

2
Constructive-originative—This "What shall we do?" function embraces all items that require something new to be devised, such as a new policy, a new strategy, a new sales target, a new product, a new marketing plan, a new procedure, and so forth. This sort of discussion asks people to contribute their knowledge, experience, judgment, and ideas. Obviously, the plan will probably be inadequate unless all relevant parties are present and pitching in.

3
Executive responsibilities—This is the "How shall we do it?" function, which comes after it has been decided what the members are going to do; at this point, executive responsibilities for the different components of the task have to be distributed around the table. Whereas in the second function the contributors' importance is their knowledge and ideas, here their contribution is the responsibility for implementing the plan. The fact that they and their subordinates are affected by it makes their contribution especially significant.

It is of course possible to allocate these executive responsibilities without a meeting, by separate individual briefings, but several considerations often make a meeting desirable:

First, it enables the members as a group to find the best way of achieving the objectives.

Second, it enables each member to understand and influence the way in which his own job fits in with the jobs of the others and with the collective task.

Third, if the meeting is discussing the implementation of a decision taken at a higher level, securing the group's consent may be of prime importance. If so, the fact that the group has the opportunity to formulate the detailed action plan itself may be the decisive factor in securing its agreement, because in that case the final decision belongs, as it were, to the group. Everyone is committed to what the group decides and is collectively responsible for the final shape of the project, as well as individually answerable for his own part in it. Ideally, this sort of agenda item starts with a policy, and ends with an action plan.

4
Legislative framework: Above and around all considerations of "What to do" and "How to do it," there is a framework—a departmental or divisional organization—and a system of rules, routines, and procedures within and through which all the activity takes place. Changing this framework and introducing a new organization or new procedures can be deeply disturbing to committee members and a threat to their status and long-term security. Yet leaving it unchanged can stop the organization from adapting to a changing world. At whatever level this change happens, it must have the support of all the perceived leaders whose groups are affected by it.

The key leaders for this legislative function must collectively make or confirm the decision; if there is any important dissent, it is very dangerous to close the discussion and make the decision by decree. The group leaders cannot expect quick decisions if they are seeking to change the organization framework and routines that people have grown up with. Thus they must be prepared to leave these

items unresolved for further discussion and consultation. As Francis Bacon put it—and it has never been put better—"Counsels to which time hath not been called, time will not ratify."

Making preparations

The four different functions just discussed may of course be performed by a single meeting, as the group proceeds through the agenda. Consequently, it may be a useful exercise for the chairman to go through the agenda, writing beside each item which function it is intended to fulfill. This exercise helps clarify what is expected from the discussion and helps focus on which people to bring in and what questions to ask them.

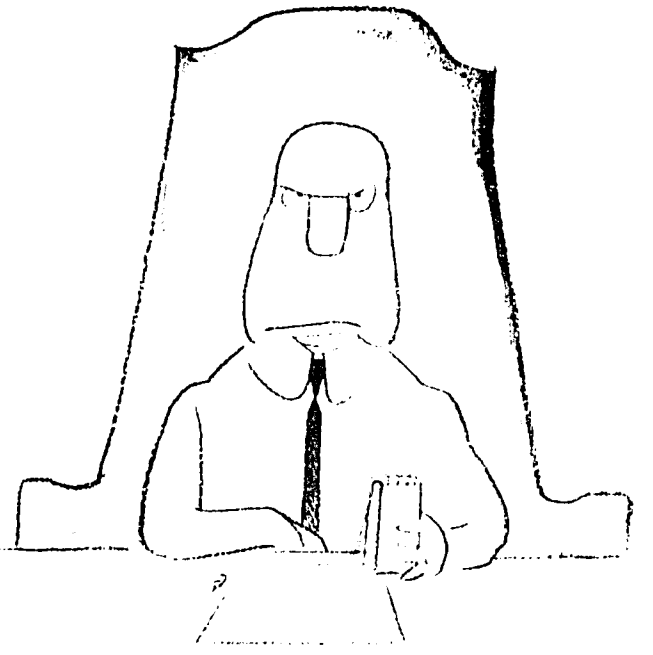
People

The value and success of a committe meeting are seriously threatened if too many people are present. Between 4 and 7 is generally ideal, 10 is tolerable, and 12 is the outside limit. So the chairman should do everything he can to keep numbers down, consistent with the need to invite everyone with an important contribution to make.

The leader may have to leave out people who expect to come or who have always come. For this job he may need tact; but since people generally preserve a fiction that they are overworked already and dislike serving on committees, it is not usually hard to secure their consent to stay away.

If the leader sees no way of getting the meeting down to a manageable size, he can try the following devices: (a) analyze the agenda to see whether everyone has to be present for every item (he may be able to structure the agenda so that some people can leave at half time and others can arrive); (b) ask himself whether he doesn't really need two separate, smaller meetings rather than one big one; and (c) determine whether one or two groups can be asked to thrash some of the topics out in advance so that only one of them needs to come in with its proposals.

Remember, too, that a few words with a member on the day before a meeting can increase the value of the meeting itself, either by ensuring that an important point is raised that comes better from the floor than from the chair or by preventing a time-wasting discussion of a subject that need not be touched on at all.



Papers

The agenda is by far the most important piece of paper. Properly drawn up, it has a power of speeding and clarifying a meeting that very few people understand or harness. The main fault is to make it unnecessarily brief and vague. For example, the phrase "development budget" tells nobody very much, whereas the longer explanation "To discuss the proposal for reduction of the 1976–1977 development budget now that the introduction of our new product has been postponed" helps all committee members to form some views or even just to look up facts and figures in advance.

Thus the leader should not be afraid of a long agenda, provided that the length is the result of his analyzing and defining each item more closely, rather than of his adding more items than the meeting can reasonably consider in the time allowed. He should try to include, very briefly, some indication of the reason for each topic to be discussed. If one item is of special interest to the group, it is often a good idea to single it out for special mention in a covering note.

The leader should also bear in mind the useful device of heading each item "For information," "For discussion," or "For decision" so that those at the meeting know where they are trying to get to.

And finally, the chairman should not circulate the agenda too far in advance, since the less organized members will forget it or lose it. Two or three days is about right—unless the supporting papers are voluminous.

Other 'paper' considerations: The order of items on the agenda is important. Some aspects are obvious—the items that need urgent decision have to come before those that can wait till next time. Equally, the leader does not discuss the budget for the reequipment program before discussing whether to put the reequipment off until next year. But some aspects are not so obvious. Consider:

☐
The early part of a meeting tends to be more lively and creative than the end of it, so if an item needs mental energy, bright ideas, and clear heads, it may be better to put it high up on the list. Equally, if there is one item of great interest and concern to everyone, it may be a good idea to hold it back for a while and get some other useful work done first. Then the star item can be introduced to carry the meeting over the attention lag that sets in after the first 15 to 20 minutes of the meeting.

☐
Some items unite the meeting in a common front while others divide the members one from another. The leader may want to start with unity before entering into division, or he may prefer the other way around. The point is to be aware of the choice and to make it consciously, because it is apt to make a difference to the whole atmosphere of the meeting. It is almost always a good idea to find a unifying item with which to end the meeting.

☐
A common fault is to dwell too long on trivial but urgent items, to the exclusion of subjects of fundamental importance whose significance is long-term rather than immediate. This can be remedied by putting on the agenda the time at which discussion of the important long-term issue will begin and by sticking to it.

☐
Very few business meetings achieve anything of value after two hours, and an hour and a half is enough time to allocate for most purposes.

☐
It is often a good idea to put the finishing time of a meeting on the agenda as well as the starting time.

☐
If meetings have a tendency to go on too long, the chairman should arrange to start them one hour before lunch or one hour before the end of work. Generally, items that ought to be kept brief can be introduced ten minutes from a fixed end point.

☐
The practice of circulating background or proposal papers along with the minutes is, in principle, a good one. It not only saves time, but it also helps in formulating useful questions and considerations in advance. But the whole idea is sabotaged once the papers get too long; they should be brief or provide a short summary. If they are circulated, obviously the chairman has to read them, or at least must not be caught not having read them.

(One chairman, more noted for his cunning than his conscientiousness, is said to have spent 30 seconds before each meeting going through all the papers he had not read with a thick red pen, marking lines and question marks in the margins at random, and making sure these were accidentally made visible to the meeting while the subject was being discussed.)

☐
If papers are produced at the meeting for discussion, they should obviously be brief and simple, since everyone has to read them. It is a supreme folly to bring a group of people together to read six pages of closely printed sheets to themselves. The exception is certain kinds of financial and statistical papers whose function is to support and illustrate verbal points as reference documents rather than to be swallowed whole; these are often better tabled at the meeting.

☐
All items should be thought of and thought about in advance if they are to be usefully discussed. Listing "Any other business" on the agenda is an invitation to waste time. This does not absolutely preclude the chairman's announcing an extra agenda item at a meeting if something really urgent and unforeseen crops up or is suggested to him by a member, provided it is fairly simple and straightforward. Nor does it preclude his leaving time for general unstructured discussion after the close of the meeting.

☐
The chairman, in going through the agenda items in advance, can usefully insert his own brief notes of points he wants to be sure are not omitted from

the discussion. A brief marginal scribble of "How much notice?" or "Standby arrangements?" or whatever is all that is necessary.

The chairman's job

Let's say that you have just been appointed chairman of the committee. You tell everyone that it is a bore or a chore. You also tell them that you have been appointed "for my sins." But the point is that you tell them. There is no getting away from it: some sort of honor or glory attaches to the chairman's role. Almost everyone is in some way pleased and proud to be made chairman of something. And that is three quarters of the trouble.

Master or servant?

Their appointment as committee chairman takes people in different ways. Some seize the opportunity to impose their will on a group that they see themselves licensed to dominate. Their chairmanship is a harangue, interspersed with demands for group agreement.

Others are more like scoutmasters, for whom the collective activity of the group is satisfaction enough, with no need for achievement. Their chairmanship is more like the endless stoking and fueling of a campfire that is not cooking anything.

And there are the insecure or lazy chairmen who look to the meeting for reassurance and support in their ineffectiveness and inactivity, so that they can spread the responsibility for their indecisiveness among the whole group. They seize on every expression of disagreement or doubt as a justification for avoiding decision or action.

But even the large majority who do not go to those extremes still feel a certain pleasurable tumescence of the ego when they take their place at the head of the table for the first time. The feeling is no sin: the sin is to indulge it or to assume that the pleasure is shared by the other members of the meeting.

It is the chairman's self-indulgence that is the greatest single barrier to the success of a meeting. His first duty, then, is to be aware of the temptation and

of the dangers of yielding to it. The clearest of the danger signals is hearing himself talking a lot during a discussion.

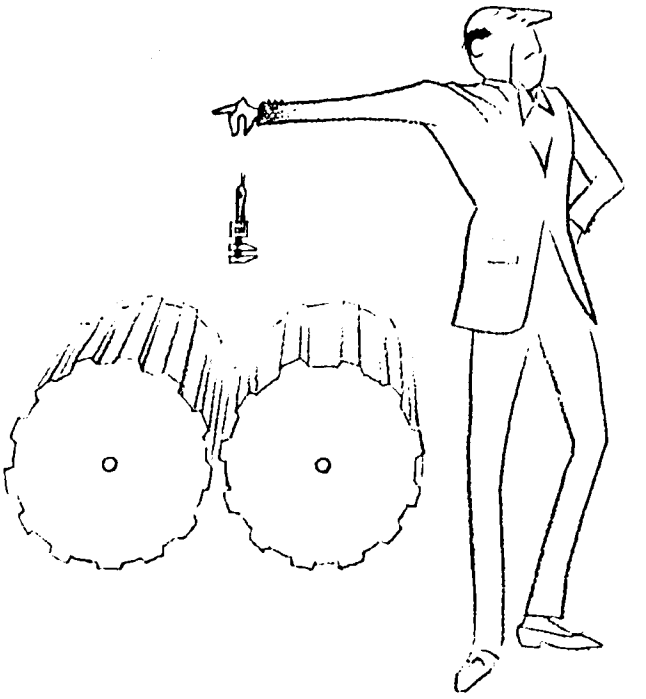
One of the best chairmen I have ever served under makes it a rule to restrict her interventions to a single sentence, or at most two. She forbids herself ever to contribute a paragraph to a meeting she is chairing. It is a harsh rule, but you would be hard put to find a regular attender of her meetings (or anyone else's) who thought it was a bad one.

There is, in fact, only one legitimate source of pleasure in chairmanship, and that is pleasure in the achievements of the meeting—and to be legitimate, it must be shared by all those present. Meetings are *necessary* for all sorts of basic and primitive human reasons, but they are *useful* only if they are seen by all present to be getting somewhere—and somewhere they know they could not have gotten to individually.

If the chairman is to make sure that the meeting achieves valuable objectives, he will be more effective seeing himself as the servant of the group rather than as its master. His role then becomes that of assisting the group toward the best conclusion or decision in the most efficient manner possible: to interpret and clarify; to move the discussion forward; and to bring it to a resolution that everyone understands and accepts as being the will of the meeting, even if the individuals do not necessarily agree with it.

His true source of authority with the members is the strength of his perceived commitment to their combined objective and his skill and efficiency in helping and guiding them to its achievement. Control and discipline then become not the act of imposing his will on the group but of imposing the group's will on any individual who is in danger of diverting or delaying the progress of the discussion and so from realizing the objective.

Once the members realize that the leader is impelled by his commitment to their common objective, it does not take great force of personality for him to control the meeting. Indeed, a sense of urgency and a clear desire to reach the best conclusion as quickly as possible are a much more effective disciplinary instrument than a big gavel. The effective chairman can then hold the discussion to the point by indicating that there is no time to pursue a particular idea now, that there is no time for long speeches, that the group has to get through



this item and on to the next one, rather than by resorting to pulling rank.

There are many polite ways the chairman can indicate a slight impatience even when someone else is speaking—by leaning forward, fixing his eyes on the speaker, tensing his muscles, raising his eyebrows, or nodding briefly to show the point is taken. And when replying or commenting, the chairman can indicate by the speed, brevity, and finality of his intonation that "we have to move on." Conversely, he can reward the sort of contribution he is seeking by the opposite expressions and intonations, showing that there is plenty of time for that sort of idea, and encouraging the speaker to develop the point.

After a few meetings, all present readily understand this nonverbal language of chairmanship. It is the chairman's chief instrument of educating the group into the general type of "meeting behavior" that he is looking for. He is still the servant of the group, but like a hired mountain guide, he is the one who knows the destination, the route, the weather signs, and the time the journey will take. So if he suggests that the members walk a bit faster, they take his advice.

This role of servant rather than master is often obscured in large organizations by the fact that

the chairman is frequently the line manager of the members: this does not, however, change the reality of the role of chairman. The point is easier to see in, say, a neighborhood action group. The question in that case is, simply, "Through which person's chairmanship do we collectively have the best chance of getting the children's playground built?"

However, one special problem is posed by this definition of the chairman's role, and it has an extremely interesting answer. The question is: How can the chairman combine his role with the role of a member advocating one side of an argument?

The answer comes from some interesting studies by researchers who sat in on hundreds of meetings to find out how they work. Their consensus finding is that most of the effective discussions have, in fact, two leaders: one they call a "team," or "social," leader; the other a "task," or "project," leader.

Regardless of whether leadership is in fact a single or a dual function, for our purposes it is enough to say that the chairman's best role is that of social leader. If he wants a particular point to be strongly advocated, he ensures that it is someone else who leads off the task discussion, and he holds back until much later in the argument. He might indeed change or modify his view through hearing the discussion, but even if he does not it is much easier for him to show support for someone else's point later in the discussion, after listening to the arguments. Then, he can summarize in favor of the one he prefers.

The task advocate might regularly be the chairman's second-in-command, or a different person might advocate for different items on the agenda. On some subjects, the chairman might well be the task advocate himself, especially if they do not involve conflict within the group. The important point is that the chairman has to keep his "social leadership" even if it means sacrificing his "task leadership." However, if the designated task advocate persists in championing a cause through two or three meetings, he risks building up quite a head of antagonism to him among the other members. Even so, this antagonism harms the group less by being directed at the "task leader" than at the "social leader."

Structure of discussion

It may seem that there is no right way or wrong way to structure a committee meeting discussion. A subject is raised, people say what they think, and finally a decision is reached, or the discussion is terminated. There is some truth in this. Moreover, it would be a mistake to try and tie every discussion of every item down to a single immutable format.

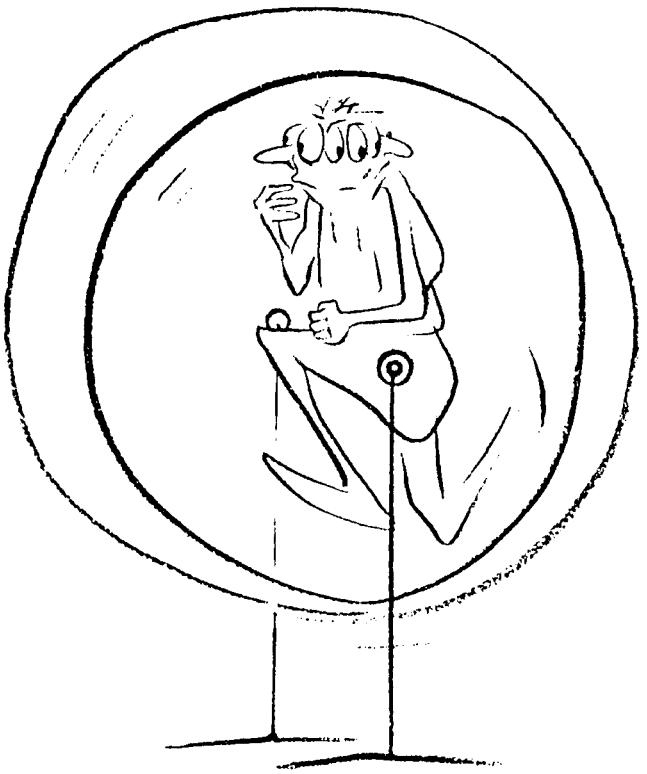
Nevertheless, there is a logical order to a group discussion, and while there can be reasons for not following it, there is no justification for not being aware of it. In practice, very few discussions are inhibited, and many are expedited, by a conscious adherence to the following stages, which follow exactly the same pattern as a visit to the doctor:

"What seems to be the trouble?" The reason for an item being on a meeting agenda is usually like the symptom we go to the doctor with: "I keep getting this pain in my back" is analogous to "Sales have risen in Germany but fallen in France." In both cases it is clear that something is wrong and that something ought to be done to put it right. But until the visit to the doctor, or the meeting of the European marketing committee, that is about all we really know.

"How long has this been going on?" The doctor will start with a case history of all the relevant background facts, and so will the committee discussion. A solid basis of shared and agreed-on facts is the best foundation to build any decision on, and a set of pertinent questions will help establish it. For example, when did French sales start to fall off? Have German sales risen exceptionally? Has France had delivery problems, or less sales effort, or weaker advertising? Have we lost market share, or are our competitors' sales falling too? If the answers to all these questions, and more, are not established at the start, a lot of discussion may be wasted later.

"Would you just lie down on the couch?" The doctor will then conduct a physical examination to find out how the patient is now. The committee, too, will want to know how things stand at this moment. Is action being taken? Do long-term orders show the same trend? What are the latest figures? What is the current stock position? How much money is left in the advertising budget?

"You seem to have slipped a disc." When the facts are established, you can move toward a diagnosis. A doctor may seem to do this quickly, but that is the result of experience and practice. He is, in fact, rapidly eliminating all the impossible or far-fetched explanations until he leaves himself with a short list. The committee, too, will hazard and eliminate a



variety of diagnoses until it homes in on the most probable—for example, the company's recent energetic and highly successful advertising campaign in Germany plus new packaging by the market leader in France.

"Take this round to the druggist." Again, the doctor is likely to take a shortcut that a committee meeting may be wise to avoid. The doctor comes out with a single prescription, and the committee, too, may agree quickly on a single course of action.

But if the course is not so clear, it is better to take this step in two stages: (a) construct a series of options—do not, at first, reject any suggestions outright but try to select and combine the promising elements from all of them until a number of thought-out, coherent, and sensible suggestions are on the table; and (b) only when you have generated these options do you start to choose among them. Then you can discuss and decide whether to pick the course based on repackaging and point-of-sale promotion, or the one based on advertising and a price cut, or the one that bides its time and saves the money for heavier new-product promotion next year.

If the item is at all complex or especially significant, it is important for the chairman not only to have the proposed course of the discussion in his own head, but also to announce it so that everyone knows. A good idea is to write the headings on an easel pad with a felt pen. This saves much of the time wasting and confusion that result when people raise items in the wrong place because they were not privy to the chairman's secret that the right place was coming up later on in the discussion.

Conducting the meeting

Just as the driver of a car has two tasks, to follow his route and to manage his vehicle, so the chairman's job can be divided into two corresponding tasks, dealing with the subject and dealing with the people.

Dealing with the subject

The essence of this task is to follow the structure of discussion as just described in the previous section. This, in turn, entails listening carefully and keeping the meeting pointed toward the objective.

At the start of the discussion of any item, the chairman should make it clear where the meeting should try to get to by the end. Are the members hoping to make a clear decision or firm recommendation? Is it a preliminary deliberation to give the members something to go away with and think about? Are they looking for a variety of different lines to be pursued outside the meeting? Do they have to approve the proposal, or merely note it?

The chairman may give them a choice: "If we can agree on a course of action, that's fine. If not, we'll have to set up a working party to report and recommend before next month's meeting."

The chairman should make sure that all the members understand the issue and why they are discussing it. Often it will be obvious, or else they may have been through it before. If not, then he or someone he has briefed before the meeting should give a short introduction, with some indication of the reason the item is on the agenda; the story so far; the present position; what needs to be established, resolved, or proposed; and some indication of lines of inquiry or courses of action that have been

suggested or explored, as well as arguments on both sides of the issue.

If the discussion is at all likely to be long or complex, the chairman should propose to the meeting a structure for it with headings (written up if necessary), as I stated at the end of the section on "Structure of discussion." He should listen carefully in case people jump too far ahead (e.g., start proposing a course of action before the meeting has agreed on the cause of the trouble), or go back over old ground, or start repeating points that have been made earlier. He has to head discussion off sterile or irrelevant areas very quickly (e.g., the rights and wrongs of past decisions that it is too late to change, or distant prospects that are too remote to affect present actions).

It is the chairman's responsibility to prevent misunderstanding and confusion. If he does not follow an argument or understand a reference he should seek clarification from the speaker. If he thinks two people are using the same word with different meanings, he should intervene (e.g., one member using *promotion* to mean point-of-sale advertising only, and another also including media publicity).

He may also have to clarify by asking people for facts or experience that perhaps influence their view but are not known to others in the meeting. And he should be on the lookout for points where an interim summary would be helpful. This device frequently takes only a few seconds, and acts like a life belt to some of the members who are getting out of their depth.

Sometimes a meeting will have to discuss a draft document. If there are faults in it, the members should agree on what the faults are and the chairman should delegate someone to produce a new draft later. The group should never try to redraft around the table.

Perhaps one of the most common faults of chairmanship is the failure to terminate the discussion early enough. Sometimes chairmen do not realize that the meeting has effectively reached an agreement, and consequently they let the discussion go on for another few minutes, getting nowhere at all. Even more often, they are not quick enough to close a discussion *before* agreement has been reached.

A discussion should be closed once it has become clear that (a) more facts are required before further progress can be made, (b) discussion has revealed that the meeting needs the views of people not present, (c) members need more time to think about the subject and perhaps discuss it with colleagues, (d) events are changing and likely to alter or clarify the basis of the decision quite soon, (e) there is not going to be enough time at this meeting to go over the subject properly, or (f) it is becoming clear that two or three of the members can settle this outside the meeting without taking up the time of the rest. The fact that the decision is difficult, likely to be disputed, or going to be unwelcome to somebody, however, is not a reason for postponement.

At the end of the discussion of each agenda item, the chairman should give a brief and clear summary of what has been agreed on. This can act as the dictation of the actual minutes. It serves not merely to put the item on record, but also to help people realize that something worthwhile has been achieved. It also answers the question "Where did all that get us?" If the summary involves action by a member of the meeting, he should be asked to confirm his acceptance of the undertaking.

Dealing with the people

There is only one way to ensure that a meeting starts on time, and that is to start it on time. Latecomers who find that the meeting has begun without them soon learn the lesson. The alternative is that the prompt and punctual members will soon realize that a meeting never starts until ten minutes after the advertised time, and they will also learn the lesson.

Punctuality at future meetings can be wonderfully reinforced by the practice of listing late arrivals (and early departures) in the minutes. Its ostensible and perfectly proper purpose is to call the latecomer's attention to the fact that he was absent when a decision was reached. Its side effect, however, is to tell everyone on the circulation list that he was late, and people do not want that sort of information about themselves published too frequently.

There is a growing volume of work on the significance of seating positions and their effect on group behavior and relationships. Not all the findings are generally agreed on. What does seem true is that:

□

Having members sit face to face across a table facilitates opposition, conflict, and disagreement, though of course it does not turn allies into enemies. But

it does suggest that the chairman should think about whom he seats opposite himself.

□

Sitting side by side makes disagreements and confrontation harder. This in turn suggests that the chairman can exploit the friendship-value of the seats next to him.

□

There is a "dead man's corner" on the chairman's right, especially if a number of people are seated in line along from him (it does not apply if he is alone at the head of the table).

□

As a general rule, proximity to the chairman is a sign of honor and favor. This is most marked when he is at the head of a long, narrow table. The greater the distance, the lower the rank—just as the lower-status positions were "below the salt" at medieval refectories.

Control the garrulous

In most meetings someone takes a long time to say very little. As chairman, your sense of urgency should help indicate to him the need for brevity. You can also suggest that if he is going to take a long time it might be better for him to write a paper. If it is urgent to stop him in full flight, there is a useful device of picking on a phrase (it really doesn't matter what phrase) as he utters it as an excuse for cutting in and offering it to someone else: "Inevitable decline—that's very interesting. George, do you agree that the decline is inevitable?"

Draw out the silent

In any properly run meeting, as simple arithmetic will show, most of the people will be silent most of the time. Silence can indicate general agreement, or no important contribution to make, or the need to wait and hear more before saying anything, or too good a lunch, and none of these need worry you. But there are two kinds of silence you must break:

1

The silence of diffidence. Someone may have a valuable contribution to make but be sufficiently nervous about its possible reception to keep it to himself. It is important that when you draw out such a contribution, you should express interest and pleasure (though not necessarily agreement) to encourage further contributions of that sort.

2

The silence of hostility. This is not hostility to ideas, but to you as the chairman, to the meeting, and to the process by which decisions are being reached. This sort of total detachment from the whole proceedings is usually the symptom of some feeling of affront. If you probe it, you will usually find that there is something bursting to come out, and that it is better out than in.

Protect the weak

Junior members of the meeting may provoke the disagreement of their seniors, which is perfectly reasonable. But if the disagreement escalates to the point of suggesting that they have no right to contribute, the meeting is weakened. So you may have to take pains to commend their contribution for its usefulness, as a pre-emptive measure. You can reinforce this action by taking a written note of a point they make (always a plus for a member of a meeting) and by referring to it again later in the discussion (a double-plus).

Encourage the clash of ideas

But, at the same time, discourage the clash of personalities. A good meeting is not a series of dialogues between individual members and the chairman. Instead, it is a crossflow of discussion and debate, with the chairman occasionally guiding, mediating, probing, stimulating, and summarizing, but mostly letting the others thrash ideas out. However, the meeting must be a contention of *ideas*, not people.

If two people are starting to get heated, widen the discussion by asking a question of a neutral member of the meeting, preferably a question that requires a purely factual answer.

Watch out for the suggestion-squashing reflex

Students of meetings have reduced everything that can be said into questions, answers, positive reactions, and negative reactions. Questions can only seek, and answers only supply, three types of response: information, opinion, and suggestion.

In almost every modern organization, it is the suggestions that contain the seeds of future success. Although very few suggestions will ever lead to anything, almost all of them need to be given every chance. The trouble is that suggestions are much easier to ridicule than facts or opinions. If people feel that making a suggestion will provoke the negative reaction of being laughed at or squashed, they will soon stop. And if there is any status-jostling going on at the meeting, it is all too easy to use the occasion of someone's making a suggestion as the opportunity to take him down a peg. It is all too easy and a formula to ensure sterile meetings.

The answer is for you to take special notice and show special warmth when anyone makes a suggestion, and to discourage as sharply as you can the squashing-reflex. This can often be achieved by requiring the squasher to produce a better suggestion on the spot. Few suggestions can stand up to squashing in their pristine state: your reflex must be to pick out the best part of one and get the other committee members to help build it into something that might work.

Come to the most senior people last
Obviously, this cannot be a rule, but once someone of high authority has pronounced on a topic, the less senior members are likely to be inhibited. If you work up the pecking order instead of down it, you are apt to get a wider spread of views and ideas. But the juniors who start it off should only be asked for contributions within their personal experience and competence. ("Peter, you were at the Frankfurt Exhibition—what reactions did you pick up there?")

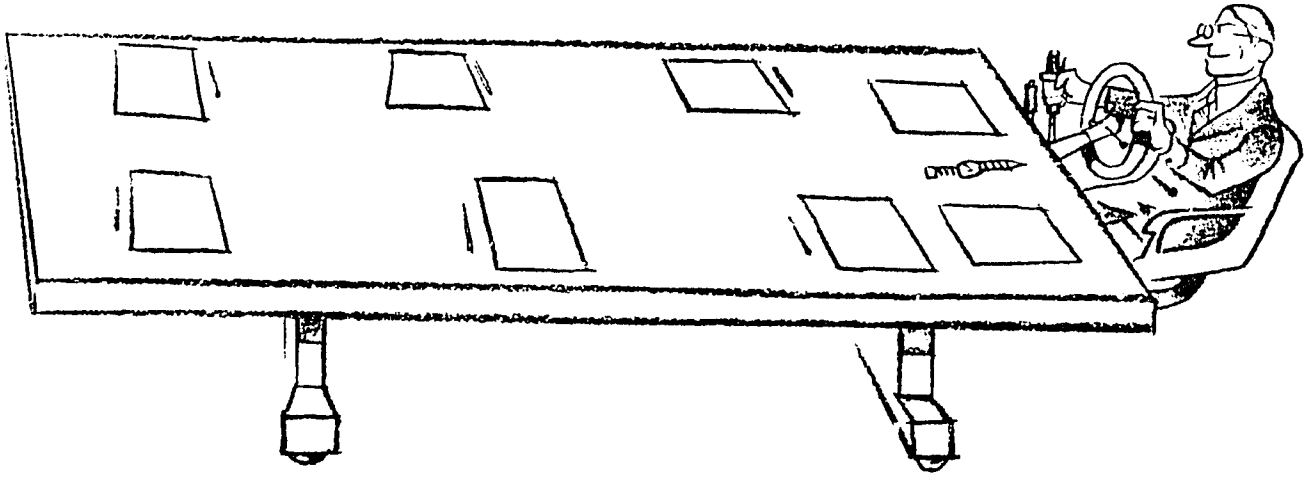
Close on a note of achievement
Even if the final item is left unresolved, you can refer to an earlier item that was well resolved as you close the meeting and thank the group.

If the meeting is not a regular one, fix the time and place of the next one before dispersing. A little time spent with appointment diaries at the end, especially if it is a gathering of five or more members, can save hours of secretarial telephoning later.

Following the meeting

Your secretary may take the minutes (or better still, one of the members), but the minutes are your responsibility. They can be very brief, but they should include these facts:

- ☐ The time and date of the meeting, where it was held, and who chaired it.
- ☐ Names of all present and apologies for absence.
- ☐ All agenda items (and other items) discussed and all decisions reached. If action was agreed on, record (and underline) the name of the person responsible for the assignment.
- ☐ The time at which the meeting ended (important because it may be significant later to know whether the discussion lasted 15 minutes or 6 hours).
- ☐ The date, time, and place of the next committee meeting.



7.
Synergy in Team Management

COMPLEXITY REQUIRES TEAMWORK

In this post-industrial period of human development, traditional organizational models and managerial styles are gradually being replaced. They are inadequate and unproductive with the new knowledge workers. Therefore, a major transition is underway in social systems from "disappearing bureaucracies" to "emerging ad hocracies." In these turbulent times, leaders facilitate the transcendence from past to futuristic operations by promoting matrix or team management approaches. Whether the strategy is called a project, task force, product or business systems team, or ad hoc planning committee, work is organized around a "temporary" group that involves permanent (functional) and impermanent lines of authority. Such endeavors at organizational alteration and design are bridges from the way we have been doing work to the way we will be conducting human enterprise in the decades ahead. Today's microelectronic and semiconductor companies often result from the synergy of entrepreneurial teams.

The dictionary defines a "team" as a number of persons associated in some joint action, while "teamwork" is described as cooperative or coordinated effort on the part of persons working together. Dr. William Dyer notes that "teams are collections of people who must rely upon group collaboration if each member is to experience the optimum of success and goal achievement."[1]

The Society of Advanced Management explains "management" as a science and an art:

> Management as a science is organized knowledge—concepts, theory, principles and techniques—underlying the practice of managing; as an art, it is

Taken from: Managing Cultural Differences, Philip R. Harris & Robert T. Moran, Gulf Publishing, 1979, pages 123-136.

application of organized knowledge to realities in a situation with a blend or compromise to obtain practical results.

The art and science of team management is emerging, especially among practitioners of project and product management. Synergy is necessary for cooperative or combined action by team members and it occurs when group participants are effective at sharing their perceptions and insights, their experience and knowledge, for common purposes. Synergy results when individuals create a new team culture—group attitudes, norms, customs, and practices—which foster the accomplishment of team objectives.

Changing technology and markets have stimulated the team approach to management, as well as awareness of the interdependence of organizational components. Furthermore, the complexity of society, and the human systems devised to meet continuing and new needs, requires a pooling of resources and talents. Inflation, resource scarcity, reduced personnel levels, budget cuts, and similar constraints have underscored the demands for better coordination and synergy in the use of "brainpower." Professors Stanley Davis and Paul Lawrence have cited three conditions for the growth of matrix organizational approaches, and have summarized the situation fostering a multiple command structure, system, and behavior:

> *First condition: outside pressure for dual focus.* The very size of some tasks, which customers, governments, or society require of the organization, forces new divisions of labor and authority.
>
> *Second condition: pressure for high information-processing.* The nature of work that is "too big" for traditional approaches also requires innovative, high-speed communication networks that keep all informed who have the "need-to-know" about work progress. An enriched information-processing capacity is essential in decentralized organizations where interdependence increases the communication load.
>
> *Third condition: pressure for shared resources.* Large scale projects demand both human economies and high performance. The pressure builds for fully utilizing scarce human resources to meet high quality standards. Matrix management permits redeployment of expensive, highly specialized talent, as well as of costly capital resources and physical facilities.[2]

In effect, the matrix or team management model causes a new organizational culture to be formulated. High technology corporations are indicative of this change, with project teams consisting of a variety of skilled specialists from mangement information systems, accounting, and new technologies. Obsolete business separations give way to synergistic, functional arrangements among those employed in manufacturing, marketing, and administration; line and staff activities overlap and often merge.

Synergy through team efforts can occur within a single enterprise, or among different organizations that were formerly in competition or that rarely mixed. The

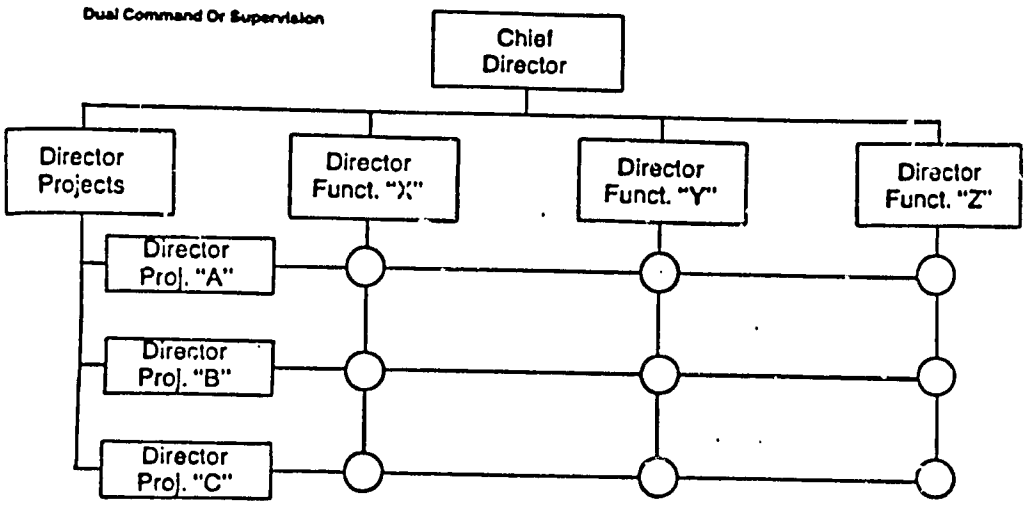


Figure 7-1. Model of matrix organizational structure.

trend is evident among companies, agencies, and associations, as well as between the private and public sectors. Davis and Lawrence maintain that matrix management is moving beyond industry to insurance, banking, accounting, law, securities, retailing, construction, education, and health and human services. This is happening, in addition to the above mentioned conditions, because of pressures created by geography, functions or services, and/or distinguishable clients. The computer has been the most powerful tool in making team management feasible, and it has fostered a revolution in organizational culture. Figure 7-1 offers a model of matrix organizational structure. The case for when and why such a management approach is recommended is summarized on page 126.

Regionalism has also promoted team management strategies. Government entities find that problems of planning, economics, ecology, conservation, and even population control are too big for local solutions. Only by the integration of overlapping jurisdictions and efforts can the public sector meet the challenges of the superindustrial age. Thus, there is a remarkable growth in the establishment of interagency task forces in planning, training, or criminal justice activities. For effective macro problem-solving in complex societies, regional commissions are sometimes formed in which local governmental power is delegated to a more comprehensive organization, which brings together a technical support staff with representatives of each local government. Then, skill in team management is necessary if synergy is to take place and improvements occur.

Regardless of the type of organization, team management calls for new skills if personnel potential is to be fully realized. Although the team is composed of knowledgeable people, they need to learn new ways of relating and working together to solve cross-functional problems and to attain synergy. To be more than a collection of persons, team building is an essential behavioral science technology that ensures group effectiveness. Experienced employees of hierarchical organiza-

Matrix as Transitional Bridge*

When:
- *Rapid technological advancements*
- Need for *timely decisions*
- Vast quantity of data
- Increased volume of new products and services
- Need for simultaneous dual decision making
- Strong constraints on financial and/or human resources

Why:
- Flexible, adaptive system
- Provides timely, balanced decision making
- Permits rapid management response to changing market and technology
- Trains managers for ambiguity, complexity, and executive positions
- Synergizes, motivates, and focuses human energy

* Courtesy of Hughes Aircraft Company.

tions have been conditioned to traditional organizational culture. Human factors of interpersonal relations and the dynamics of group behavior must be considered or teamwork will not occur. Teams must be concerned with task accomplishment and people maintenance. Synergy in teams must be *created*. Furthermore, the issue is not just how the team can function more synergistically, but how it integrates with the overall organization or society that it supposedly serves.

CREATING A TEAM CULTURE

For any team to be effective, members should be concerned about coordinating efforts, productive activities, and economical performance by the group. Jack Morton of Bell Laboratories once wrote of two contemporary management challenges: one is to hire and keep competent specialists who know a field of knowledge and keep current in it; the other is to get these technical specialists coupled across disciplines because today's problems are more often interdisciplinary in nature. Essentially, the same may be said for any team management endeavor.

The criterion for team selection is the *authority of competence*—the individual has some knowledge, information, or expertise that can help the group achieve its mission. The unique competence of the team participant becomes a new norm, regardless of sex, race, organizational seniority, or level in the hierarchy. Formerly, organizational group activity was arranged on the bases of commonality in product, process, function, service, geography, or even customer. Today, synergizing specialized resources requires competency in managing small- or large-scale projects, and expertise in time and conflict management. Because a techni-

cian may serve on two or more projects, while based in an existing functional area, three managers may have to share that human resource by creating integrative mechanisms that ensure the common organizational good.

Increasingly, team management is employed when the organization's activities are less repetitive and predictable. Such an approach increases the need for liaison, management by exception, and sharing of authority and information. All this is contrary to traditional organizational cultures. Management in uncertainty today challenges organizations to improve information processing, enhance integration of realistic schedules, and share decision-making, subject to continuing revision and change.

Furthermore, there is a fundamental shift in the way power is exercised. Interfunctional product teams, for example, involve a delicate balance of power among peer specialists. Because joint decisions are to be made, each member must be sensitive to the others if the contributions of all are to lead to the team's success. The product manager's task is to facilitate collaboration across functional lines. For many this will necessitate an "attitude change." In America, there is much discusssion about "reindustrialization," which demands cooperation rather than confrontation in the triple relationship between business, labor, and government. The attempts to resolve the U.S. automobile industry's crisis illustrate how essential such synergistic problem-solving is. Rather than considering each other natural enemies, these three elements must compromise and collaborate if each is to succeed. Even where a functional approach to business is still in force, labor and management can develop team relations. In Japan, to cite one illustration, quality-control circles made up of workers and supervisors meet regularly to discuss how to improve product quality.

Peter Drucker reminds us that "top management strategies are not mechanical; they are above all cultural." Thus, when an organization opts for team or matrix management, it implies a change in its ways of acting and thinking. Team management means the creation of shared values and assumptions. Thus, team members can begin to identify with one another and develop expectations of predictable behavior. But people are products of national cultures. So, while some form of team management may be characteristic of advanced technological societies, it will reflect a country's macroculture. Thus, the German *vorstand* is a board-like group with collegial decision-making and coordination among top managers. The French, on the other hand, are adverse to absolutist power and omnipotent authority, so their organizations separate authority from responsibility so as to simultaneously protect individual and collective actions. Modern matrix management typically reflects American culture, and is less popular with the British, who place more emphasis on form and ordered regularity.

Because the authors are products of Canadian and United States cultures, this book's subject matter reflects a North American approach. Therefore, the following observations on what is considered desirable in a team culture might be questioned in whole or part by readers from other national backgrounds. In any event,

for purposes of discussion, here are some characteristics that we think also facilitate team success:

1. Tolerance of ambiguity, uncertainity, and seeming lack of structure.
2. Taking interest in each member's achievement, as well as the group's.
3. Ability to give and accept feedback in a non defensive manner.
4. Openness to change, innovation, and creative problem-solving.
5. Creation of a team atmosphere that is informal, relaxed, comfortable, and non judgmental.
6. Capacity to establish intense, short-term member relations, and to disconnect for the next project.
7. Seeking group participation, consensus, and decisions.
8. Concern to keep group communication on target and schedule, while permitting disagreement and valuing effective listening.
9. Urging a spirit of constructive criticism, and authentic, non-evaluative feedback.
10. Encouraging members to express feelings and to be concerned about group morale/maintenance.
11. Clarifying roles, relationships, assignments and responsibilities.
12. Sharing leadership functions within group, and utilizing total member resources.
13. Pausing periodically from task pursuits to reexamine and re-evaluate team progress and communications.
14. Fostering trust, confidence, and commitment within the group.
15. Being sensitive to the team's linking function with other work units.
16. Fostering a norm that members will be supportive and respectful of one another, and realistic in their expectations of each other.
17. Promoting an approach that is goal-directed, divides the labor fairly, and synchronizes effort.

Each team experience is different, and organizations should encourage such uniqueness, just as in departments and division. Yet at the same time, coordination and integration of team effort with other units and the whole enterprise is essential if the sum is to be greater than its parts. When team cultures contain the elements previously outlined, and are reflective of the whole organizational environment, then they become closely knitted and productive. The "deeper" into a large organization team participation is provided, and the more employees *included* in team decision-making, the healthier and more relevant will that human system become.

The teams may be part of the formal organization structure as in the case of matrix management. However, some traditional hierarchies are slow and difficult to change. Then collateral organizations of informal teams may be formulated as a secondary mode of problem-solving. This unofficial, parallel organizational arrangement is a change strategy to use with problems that are intractable in the formal system. Such an approach is especially useful to middle managers because it gives them visibility and experience in group action on high-priority, organization-

wide problems that are persistent and often neglected by the traditional organization, which concentrates on structured problems of authority and production.

Team management is suitable for knowledge problems that require high-quality, creative solutions with rapid processing and high output. When complex, modern problems are *less* structured, quantifiable, definable, and past experience is unreliable, then team management is necessary.

THE CASE FOR TEAM EFFECTIVENESS

Team and matrix management seemingly came to the fore with space industry, and the NASA goal to put a man on the moon. One of the successful pioneers in such approaches is TRW Systems in Redondo Beach, California, U.S.A. We are indebted to its former vice-president and now an independent consultant, Sheldon A. Davis, for the elements of the following case constructed from his writings and interviews.

Davis defines "work culture" as the habitual patterns of communication between departments and individuals, especially with regard to the perception of each other's roles, behavior, and attitudes. He envisions "organization development" as a long-term program of systematic attention to modify and improve that work culture. Davis sees "team building" as a key OD tool to assist people whose jobs are interrelated to examine how effectively they function as a team, to identify barriers to their collaboration, and to mutually undertake means that eliminate or reduce such obstacles. The focus is upon work behavior and how it influences job performance of the individual and other team members. Consider this case for team development:*

> A major aerospace firm had a number of projects underway that required the services of highly specialized employees. Such personnel were to be assigned to one or more projects on a part-time basis from their regular departmental locations. At first, line managers were reluctant to share their "manpower" with project managers because of conflicting loyalities, especially that the adhoc groups would claim too much time of this talented employee. Frankly, the line supervisors distrusted the PM's ability to consider the interests of other units in the organization equally with their own needs.
>
> Top management insisted that this project management approach was an essential first step to a major reorganization. From occasional task force utilization, the corporation intended to move in the direction of matrix management. That meant introducing a multiple command system where one competent worker might report to two or more bosses. The company was developing a support program for this purpose, including a new computerized, management information system. The old organization chart was to give way to a "matrix" type illustration of diverse reporting relationships that included both permanent and temporary management authority.

*Refer to film and Leader's Guide on *Team Building*, BNA Films, 9410 Decoverly Hall Road, Rockville, Md. 20850.

206

To help the temporary project teams work more effectively the personnel department was introducing a new organization development program that included team building sessions. One laboratory manager resented taking his people off their jobs for such "navel gazing." But the project managers who had temporary authority over some of the same employees countered, "It's not just important to get the job done, but occasionally to examine *how* it is done and *how* we are collaborating. That's what team building is all about, plus improving the interface between the teams and the functional units."

The lab manager retorted, "We need to coordinate our activities and perform economically. If this team building will help to acccomplish that, then *maybe* it will have some 'pay-off' to replace the time my people will lose from their jobs." The PM responded, "My project is only a minimum core group for overall planning, budgeting, coordination and systems engineering. We depend on your department's expertise for the design and technical work. Eventually this matrix approach will help us all get maximum utilization of scarce, technical resources. It will help us to magnify the impact of our human assets!"

"But you and I, plus the other PM's, are all competing for the same resources and manpower," the lab manager continued. "There is going to have to be a lot of 'trade-off' on the part of all of us with managerial responsibilities, and we are not used to working like this. I can see us at cross-purposes with much conflict."

"Well," the PM remarked, "I understand that Personnel also plans some intergroup team building so that we learn new skills for this purpose. They maintain that the conflict can be managed and utilized for the common good, and that we can learn cross-functional collaboration for complex space productions. Team building is supposed to give us an opportunity to develop linking or coupling relations to avoid waste of our energies."

The lab supervisor sighed, "Those sessions better work, then, or this place is going to be in one big mess. Engineers and scientists are no-nonsense characters, not used to that human relations stuff. One value I do suspect that will come from such training is that technical types will learn some people skills that might eventually help to make them better managers when they get into supervision."

Team Development Guidelines and Evaluation

Just like the organization in general, we might have an image of the team as an "energy exchange system." When the group functions, human psychic and physical energy is utilized effectively. Team interaction is an energy exchange. As the group seeks to achieve its goals, members energize or motivate themselves and one another by their example. Team planning and changes become projections on energy use and its alteration. Every aspect of the group process can be analyzed in terms of this human energy paradigm. The key issue, then, is how the team manages its energies most productively, and avoids underutilizing or even wasting the

group energies. There are ways that members can analyze their functions and performance in projects, task forces, or product teams.

Team behavior can be examined from the viewpoint of task functions, which initiate, give or seek information, clarify or elaborate on member ideas, and summarize or synthesize. It can also be seen from the angle of group maintenance or morale building, such as encouraging, expressing group feeling, harmonizing, compromising, and "gate-keeping" on communication channels.

Such data-gathering can be useful periodically to improve the group's effectiveness. Not only can the information help the person to change his or her team behavior, but when such data is combined into a visual profile, it offers a diagnosis of team health from time to time. It is recommended that teams pause on occasion for self-examination of their progress. Sometimes a third-person facilitator, such as an internal or external consultant, can be most helpful in this regard. When the group's analysis of its maturity is summarized on a newsprint tablet or overhead slide, or even in a typed summary report, the team can then view the total assessment and discuss its implications for effective energy use.

Increasing Team Effectiveness

Team participation is an intensive learning experience. When members voluntarily involve themselves and fully participate, personal and professional growth is fostered. The team is like a laboratory of the larger organizational world in which it operates. Although a temporary experience, it is an opportunity for individual and team development. Each participant shares self and insights from the basis of unique life and organizational experiences. Synergy occurs when the members listen to each other and enter into the private worlds of the others. Total team perception and wisdom then become more than the sum of the parts. To promote maximum self-actualization and energize the group's potential, the following ground rules for greater team effectiveness are recommended. Remember, these suggestions come from the authors' cultural perspectives:

1. Be *experimental*—in this learning experience test new styles of leadership and communication, different kinds of behavior and attitudes, new patterns of personal participation and relationships, joint problem-solving efforts.
2. Be *authentic*—level in your communication; tell it like it is in your feedback; care about team members, even enough to confront them, rather than play games.
3. Be *sensitive*—express your feelings, and be conscious of the other person's feelings; empathetically respond and reflect on the sender's real meaning, not just his or her words. Be aware of the whole range of non-verbal communication and cues.
4. Be *spontaneous*—respond creatively to the here and now data produced in the group; to the person as he or she now reveals self. (Avoid being strategic

or manipulative, or engrossed in the previous there and then). Warmly receive the sharing of another and thereby be confirmed yourself.

5. Be *helpful*—accept the other's perception of self and the situation; avoid imposing your system, values, or opinions upon the other. A helping relationship means that the other must perceive your assistance as being helpful. This will occur when you help that person discover new dimensions for self; to appreciate the need to break through one's own barriers (or bag). By sharing yourself, you permit another team member to enlarge and revise one's own psychological construct (namely, the way that person reads meaning into his life experiences).
6. Be *open*—consider other viewpoints and possibilities, rather than being closed-minded or locked into your own previous conceptions. Evaluate and check feedback from others to arrive at your own determination. Be flexible, not rigid in responding to new ideas and different perceptions.
7. Be *time conscious*—the team meetings are limited in time availability for accomplishing a specific task. Avoid taking up too much "air time" or by diverting the group from its mission. Be willing to listen, but when others stray from the subject, bring the group back on target.
8. Exercise *group leadership*—team participation is an opportunity to practice the whole range of leadership skills, whether as an initiator or follower. The participative team is a leaderless group, in the sense that there is no authoritarian leader. The leadership is shared and group centered. Each is permitted to do "his or her thing," which will contribute most to group progress (from promoting the accomplishment of a task, to the maintenance of group morale).

William W. Hines, a utility training manager, describes five goals for increasing team effectiveness:

1. Look at how well team members communicate as a group.
2. Observe how they problem solve.
3. Help them better understand their own defined corporate objectives.
4. Assist the team in developing skills to manage and handle interpersonal conflict better.
5. Aid them in developing closer and more collaborative relationships.[3]

Hines proposes several types of team meetings to evaluate how the group is functioning: (a) feedback sessions with the facilitator on the results of individual interviews with members; (b) creative problem-solving or "brainstorming" meetings on obstacles to team effectiveness; and (c) weekly team building meetings to deal with identified interpersonal and work problems (usually about two hours in length).

In the process of human resource development, behavioral science consultants have created a number of methods and techniques for team development. The reg-

ular team-building session is considered an ongoing process to alter the way an intergrated unit works together, and essentially is a change strategy. William G. Dyer of Brigham Young University suggests that team-building be viewed as a cycle consisting of "problem identification, data-gathering by and among members, diagnosis and evaluation of the data, problem-solving and planning on the findings, implementation of the action plans, and then assessment of the results."

Perhaps an illustration from the experience of one of the authors (Harris) will illustrate the origin and purpose of team-building within a traditional bureaucracy:

> The top management of a very large fire and emergency department for a major California county were alarmed. The first-line managers, called "battalion chiefs," were considering turning their professional association into a union. To counteract the identification of these chiefs with rank and file employees and to strengthen their image of themselves as *managers*, the key administrators decided to initiate a management development institute for the battalion chiefs, each of whom might command upwards to a thousand employees during a major emergency.
>
> I designed a behavioral science program for this purpose, but built into the training some features of organization development. That data-gathering by means of instruments and group process produced information that was compiled into a report for upper management. The principal problem was a breakdown in communication between middle and upper level management, and it was perceived that the latter lacked synergy—they did not work well among themselves as an executive group and communicated confusion downward. Management accepted one of my recommendations and opted for team-building sessions for themselves.
>
> The two-day session was held at a fire camp away from the command headquarters. Top management first examined in depth the implication of their subordinates' feedback. Then more data-gathering was done among the chief engineers as to how they saw themselves as a team, their roles, and their relationships. I and my colleague not only provided some input on how they might become a more effective administrative group, but helped these public service executives to examine the "pay-off" functions of their own jobs. After two more off-site sessions, we compiled a report on the team-building findings and recommendations. As a result this key management group inaugurated their own plan to maintain the progress attained and confront the issues that hampered their working as a team. In other words, they committed themselves to action for internal improvement of their performance as a work unit, and strove to become behavior models for the next level of supervision.

Research in project and matrix management has demonstrated that organizations which take time for team-building usually increase their productivity. It is one of many innovative managerial technologies for organization development, which have ranged from sensitivity training and career development programs to job enrichment and videotaping of top performers in problem-solving sessions.

210

Because team-building strategies are still emerging, one can only review how they have been used. Dr. W. Warner Burke, editor of *Organization Dynamics*, described these five uses:

> *Start-ups*—team-building with a new group, such as plant management of a facility before it opens, or prior to the inauguration of a business systems planning group, or when several departments are relocated into a new facility.
>
> *Interpersonal relationships*—team-building sessions, usually off-site, for an intensive period together for analysis of ongoing team relations.
>
> *Content problems*—team meetings on everyday work and decision-making for effective team performance, often held on-site for short periods of time with an external facilitator. Consultation is offered on team maintenance issues, task process, norms and values.
>
> *Training*—team input sessions with an OD practioner to provide education on group decision-making and communication, problem-solving skills, interface with other teams, etc.
>
> *Long-range planning*—team sessions on forecasting, budget planning, member replacement, impact of technological/organizational changes on the team.

Typically, an internal or external facilitator provides process consultation on how the team operates, pursues its tasks, makes its decisions, shares its leadership, sets its standards and procedures, confronts and utilizes conflict, and communicates with one another and other organizational units.

Team development should focus upon the nature of work performed, the relationships of team members who must do the work, and the way in which their work together is structured. In addition to diagnosis and data-gathering, team-building helps organizational associates to confront as a group their problems, challenges, processes, and behavior. The emphasis is upon such questions as:

- What is it like to work here?
- What kinds of things help or hinder us in working together?
- What is our job and our responsibilities?
- What are our expectations of this team and each other?
- What changes could be made to improve performance?
- What does each group member need to do differently?
- What can this unit do to work more cooperatively?
- How do other teams or work units perceive us, and vice versa?
- What commitments is each member willing to make to increase our effectiveness?

Team-building is an opportunity for participants to practice skills in data collection and analysis, human relations and feedback, negotiation and compromise, conflict management, and problem-solving. It is a chance for group introspection

on "hang-ups" that affect job performance, the quality of staff meetings, the hidden agendas that undermine progress, the blocked feelings that hold back effort, the attitudes and actions that sidetrack the team. It is a synergistic system for developing organizational collaboration among knowledge workers or technical specialists. The overriding issue it confronts is "trust" and the degree to which it exists among team members and with other work units. In complex organizations in which people are so interdependent, high trust levels ensure achievement.[4]

Obviously, team-building needs to be supplemented with technical training in project or matrix management operation. In workshops on project management, the author, (Harris) provides input on the interpersonal dynamics of ad hoc groups while his colleague, Don Mabon, offers training on the technical processes for managing the project. This international engineering consultant instructs workshop participants on the project management system, organization, and objectives; and project planning, scheduling, control, appraisal, and review.

The aim of both dimensions of this management development is to promote understanding of both organizational relations and human motivation on the one hand, while teaching skills for managing temporary teams of talented people. The end purpose is to understand who is going to do what and when. Team development, as Sheldon Davis reminds us, counteracts *reverse synergy* —when people cancel each other out by not hearing, not building or working together, putting each other down, or blocking the contribution of human potential.

Conclusion

The oncoming superindustrial age will be dominated by high technology organizations. The new metaindustrial culture created in such enterprises requires people to collaborate and work in interdisciplinary, and often international, teams. Peter Drucker reminds us that any manager in a multinational business will have to learn to understand the matrix structure if that person wants to function effectively. For people conditioned by the competition and rugged individualism of the industrial age this will require training in synergy. This would include not only team-building, but education in cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication. The personnel challenge of developing global cosmopolitan leaders for transnational enterprises will extend beyond the university to corporate selection thru preretirement counseling.

During this period of organizational transition, team experience will challenge the participants to revise and expand their images of themselves and their roles. It will be a means for actualizing more of their potential, obtaining more meaning at work, and learning to develop new types of organizational relationships. Those responsible for human resource development in organizations have an opportunity through team training to increase employee awareness of the forces that influence

212

their perceptions, attitudes, and behavior, as well as their decisions, so that they have greater control of their own work space. But the real challenge in synergistic management for both the institution and the individual is to go beyond what we are and have been, and risk becoming what we can be.

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WHAT COMES AFTER THE MANAGEMENT SKILLS COURSE?

You've just completed the Management Skills Course (MSC).....so what comes next?

Will you look back on the Management Skills Course as a five day course that provided some useful insight and skills? Or do you walk away from the course seeing it as the "first phase" in a long-term management improvement effort -- for you, and for your organization?

Taking the Management Skills Course is the easy part. Weaving what you learned about effective management into the fabric of everyday life takes another level of effort. It takes a commitment to move toward achieving the goal of long-term management improvement, but it also takes nitty-gritty, everyday, sometimes tedious actions to be effective.

Much of this effort to integrate the course concepts and skills into the way that A.I.D. carries out its work must occur at the individual level. You must see to it that your work unit has a clear vision. You must carry out work planning in ways that assures agreement and commitment on the part of others to do the work within the timelines you have set, and with the quality of work you require. You must monitor the performance of these activities. You must provide performance feedback to reinforce good performance and to improve poor performance. You must manage the conflict that's getting in the way of the results that you need.

But these individual efforts can sometimes be a difficult struggle without additional outside help. More and more, this help is coming from a growing resource within A.I.D. -- MSC graduates.

The ideas presented in this article have evolved primarily out of the work being done by MSC graduates within Missions that have sponsored "mission-specific" MSC courses. These courses, to be sure, have the benefit of creating an immediate and fresh "critical mass" of MSC graduates within a Mission, but the activities suggested here would help support individual management improvement efforts in most Missions and Offices of A.I.D.

A range of course follow-up activities can be carried out by MSC graduates, including those highlighted below:

1. Check in with other course graduates

   Your mission or office probably has others who have graduated from the Management Skills Course. (The MSC Newsletter includes a regular updating of course graduates listed by mission or office). Your mission or office director and deputy director have probably gone to the Senior Management Course which shares a common approach with the MSC.

   Your experience in this course may have given you a fresh perspective on some of the things you have seen these graduates

doing. Do you have a new understanding of that senior manager's attempts to work on vision? Have you seen someone grapple with trying to give feedback in a different way?

One of your first actions when you return ought to be to try and "connect" up with other graduates. What happened to them when they came back from the course? Where might you work together in trying to make improvements in the way your organization is managed, for example, do you want to make an agreement about using the guidelines for giving and receiving feedback? What about improvements that might be made in meetings?

Other course graduates are an important resource for getting the kind of coaching and support you might be looking for as you try to improve your own management, and they very well may be looking for this from you.

Some other followup activities benefit from top management support, and discussing common interests in management improvement can build this support.

2. Hold a "management forum" in the week following the course.

Choose a few key elements of the course for discussion, perhaps led by participants from the just completed course. Circulate selected handouts to refresh memories of course concepts. Even those graduates who took the course 2-3 years ago may have (perish the thought) forgotten some key concepts.

Another approach would be to encourage other managers to sharpen their sensitivity to the skills discussed in the course by using the "Management Functions Inventory" with both the "self" and "other" questionnaires to gain feedback on their managerial effectiveness.

3. Initiate structured opportunities for MSC graduates to continue to work on and improve their management skills.

In addition to the above immediate follow-up activities, there is also a need for on-going follow-up activities. In looking at continuing to improve skills, a number of approaches could be considered:

- Informal Support Groups. Self-initiated "management improvement groups," held regularly over a brown bag lunch (i.e., discussing what's gone well, what hasn't gone so well, what needs to happen to further individual management improvement) can be very helpful. Often these meetings can be stimulated by the newsletter and articles which are periodically sent to MSC graduates.

- Management Coaching and Support. Management coaching and support should be seen as part of a manager's job. This might involve providing some training to managers, especially at the division level, so that they know how to be good "coaches". Managers at all levels should have a clear answer to the question: "To whom

can I go to get coaching and help on management skill improvement?"

- Training Sessions. Training sessions should be held on a regular basis. They can be formal: "Next week there will be a two hour session on meetings for anyone who wants to talk about running meetings". Or they can be informal: For example, as part of regular unit staff meetings, a review of one management function could be done, with discussion on how it relates to current unit plans and individual responsibilites.

- Meetings with other missions. Look for opportunities -- scheduling conferences, technical conferences, TDYs, especially to AID/W to meet with graduates from other missions to discuss management improvement efforts.

4. Help future participants.

One last action. Others in your mission or office will be taking the Management Skills Course in the future. You may even be able to influence them to be nominated. MSC graduates can really be of help in preparing subordinates and others to get the most out of the course by meeting with personnel scheduled to take the course to discuss concepts and skills and how they relate to work plans in EERs, to ongoing projects, and to individual "management improvement" issues.

DECISION MAKING

"Utilizing Human Resources: Individual Versus Group Approaches to Problem Solving and Decision Making," by John J. Sherwood and Florence M. Hoylman. *The 1978 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators.* University Associates, 1978. (optional)

REPRESENTATIONAL

"Managing Your Boss," by John J. Gabbaro and John P. Kotter. *Harvard Business Review,* January-February, 1980. (optional)

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

"You Want Me to Do What?," by Pamela Jones, Beverly Kaye, and Hugh R. Taylor. *Training and Development Journal,* July 1981. (optional)

UTILIZING HUMAN RESOURCES: INDIVIDUAL VERSUS GROUP APPROACHES TO PROBLEM SOLVING AND DECISION MAKING

John J. Sherwood and Florence M. Hoylman

A well-known joke belittling the effectiveness of groups says, "The camel is a horse designed by a committee." This statement reflects the attitude that groups often fail to use common sense in accomplishing their tasks. Nevertheless, from corporate boards of directors to fraternity membership committees, groups are used for problem solving and decision making by almost all organizations. Although the use of groups is frequent and the dissatisfaction with the products of group efforts is widespread, managers often lack clear and explicit criteria by which to decide when to assign a problem to a group and when to assign it to an individual. A straightforward set of criteria is needed for determining whether a group or an individual is likely to produce better results on a given task. If a task is referred to a group, some guidelines on how to manage the group for the most effective outcomes are useful.

WHEN TO CHOOSE A GROUP AND WHEN TO CHOOSE AN INDIVIDUAL

There are five factors to consider when deciding whether to assign a particular task to an individual or to a group of people for joint consideration: (1) the nature of the task itself; (2) how important the acceptance of the decision or the commitment to the solution is to the implementation of the solution; (3) the value placed on the quality of the decision; (4) the competency and investment of each person involved and the role each person plays in implementing the decision; and, finally, (5) the anticipated operating effectiveness of the group, especially its leadership.

Nature of the Task

It is the nature of the task itself that is the first and most important criterion in determining whether a problem would best be solved by a group or by an individual. Certain types of tasks, such as creative or independent tasks, are best performed by individuals; other types of tasks that involve integrative functions or goal setting are particularly appropriate for groups.

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218

Creative Tasks

Research reveals that individuals working separately are more creative and effective as generators of ideas and as problem solvers than individuals working together in groups (except the brainstorming group—a collection of individuals following an established procedure—which can generate more ideas than individuals working alone). When the task calls for a creative solution, that is, a new alternative or a heretofore unconsidered option, an individual is a better choice than a group. For example, individuals do better than groups at creating or constructing an original crossword puzzle, designing a technical component, or writing a computer program. When seeking a creative outcome, one would do better to find an expert in the area, rather than to assemble a number of people.

Convergent or Integrative Tasks

When the problem requires that various bits of information be brought together to produce a solution, such as developing a business strategy, evaluating a new product, or solving a crossword puzzle, groups can offer superior outcomes. The *proviso* is, of course, that the group of people is capable of working together effectively.

Independent Tasks

Sometimes an eagerness to establish more teamwork results in persons whose jobs are for the most part independent of one another being encouraged to work as a team. When interaction with others is required to get one's job done—because of the flow of the work process, the necessity to share information or skills, or other forms of task interdependency—working together frequently or occasionally as a group may be very useful. One way, however, to assure *un*satisfactory work-group meetings is to insist that people whose jobs are for the most part independent of one another work together as a team. Effective managers understand which of their subordinates need to work together to get their jobs done and which do not.

Goal Setting

The lesson of management by objectives (MBO) is that persons should be involved in determining the goals that are designed to guide their behavior and against which they are to be evaluated. When goal setting is done in relevant groupings of managers and subordinates, more commitment to individual objectives can be expected.

Importance of the Commitment to the Solution or the Acceptance of the Decision

Research has shown that when people participate in the process of reaching a decision, they have more commitment to that decision—that is, they feel more ownership over the outcome. Therefore, they are likely to have more interest in it and to make more energy available for its implementation.

On the other hand, when an individual solves a problem or makes a decision, two tasks still remain. First, others must be persuaded that the particular outcome is the best or at least is desirable. Second, others must agree to act on this decision or to carry it out. It is clear that if participation in the decision-making process increases ownership of the outcome, problems of surveillance, monitoring, and follow-up are reduced.

Not all solutions to problems are dependent on the support of other people for effective implementation. Therefore, a manager must be aware which issues require the

commitment of others and convene those people who are critical to a solution's effective implementation. Clearly, all decisions do not need to be made by group action.

Importance of the Quality of the Decision

The best managers know the trade-offs involved when they choose between a decision that has greater acceptance and commitment but is of lower quality and a decision that may be more difficult to implement but is of higher quality.

If a manager is sufficiently concerned with distributing responsibility so that a solution will be carried out completely and with dispatch, he or she may accept a solution of somewhat lower quality because it has widespread acceptance, rather than insisting on a solution of somewhat higher quality that is unacceptable to those on whom the manager is dependent for its implementation. In some cases, a manager may be willing to make an unpopular decision or to assign the solving of a problem to an individual expert, knowing that these solutions require additional resources to be invested in their implementation. The manager needs to weigh the importance of the quality of the decision.

The quality of a group product, in contrast to one produced by an individual expert in the field, varies depending on the competencies of group members, the information available to them, and their effectiveness in working together as a group.

Characteristics of Individual Group Members

There are three clear guidelines to use in assembling a group of people to address an issue: (a) the expertise each individual brings to the particular problem under consideration; (b) the stake each party has in the outcome; and (c) the role each person is likely to play in implementing any decision, that is, how dependent others will be on each individual's support of the group's solution. It is obvious from these three factors that managers probably will not wish to convene the same collection of individuals to address every issue.

Operating Effectiveness of the Group

A question that deserves special consideration is how effectively the individual members of a group will be able to work together to produce a solution of merit. This question needs to be raised each time a new group is assembled. If the members will have great difficulty in working effectively as a group, it may be better to refer the decision to an individual. In considering the operating effectiveness of the group, the skills of the leader of the group are particularly important, because the leader can do more than any other person both to enhance and to block the effectiveness of group efforts.

MANAGING A GROUP EFFECTIVELY

Groups have a great deal to offer; that is, they have particular *assets*. On the other hand, groups often fail to meet expectations for performance; that is, they also have *liabilities*. To use groups effectively, one must understand both these aspects.

Assets of Groups

Greater Knowledge and Information

Even when one person (e.g., the supervisor or a technical expert) knows much more than anyone else, the limited and unique information of others can fill important gaps. There is

simply more information, experience, and competencies in a group than in any one of its members. The issue, therefore, becomes how to make this expanded pool of knowledge available and how to utilize it effectively.

Greater Variety of Approaches

Each person brings a somewhat different perspective to a problem, and these different ways of viewing the world can open avenues of consideration outside the awareness of any single individual. In addition, individuals can get into ruts in their thinking or into patterned ways of defining problems and approaching issues. Assembling a number of people expands the potential ways a particular problem can be approached.

Increased Acceptance

When individuals have an active part in the decision-making process, their ownership of the outcome is increased. The responsibility people feel for making the solution work is thereby enhanced. As mentioned earlier, when an individual solves a problem, two additional problems remain—persuading others both to accept the solution and to carry it out.

Reduced Communication Problems

The implementation of a decision is likely to be smoother and require less surveillance when people know the goals and obstacles, the alternatives that were considered but rejected, and the facts, opinions, and projections associated with making the decision.

Liabilities of Groups

It is clear that a group has more firepower than an individual and an assembly of people has an expanded potential for new perspectives and integrative solutions. Yet five or ten capable persons can meet together to solve a problem or to make a decision and leave the meeting frustrated, with little progress or with outcomes that are acceptable to only a few of the principals. The following are obstacles to effective group functioning.

Social Pressures to Conform

Sometimes majorities or powerful minorities (or the boss) pressure people to go along with a lower quality decision. In their desire to be good group members or to be accepted, people sometimes keep their disagreements to themselves (or voice them only to close associates after a meeting).

Quick Convergence

In a group there is frequently a tendency to seize quickly on a solution that seems to have support. The apparent acceptance of an idea can overshadow appropriate concerns for quality or accuracy. Agreement often is erroneously assumed to signal the correct or the best solution. Ideas of higher quality that are introduced late in a discussion may have little chance of real consideration. Research has shown that when groups are required to produce two solutions to every problem, the second solution is frequently of better quality.

A Dominant Individual

Sometimes one person may prevail because of status, activity level, verbal skills, or stubborn persistence—all of which may be unrelated to competence in the particular task

facing the group. Since a leader is particularly likely to dominate a discussion, his or her skills and insights into the consequences of excessive control are especially important.

Secondary Goals or Hidden Agendas

Often individuals work simultaneously on the assigned task and on their own needs (usually covertly). Their hidden agendas may include personal pride, protection of one's own position or department, desires for visibility or acceptance, or personality conflicts with others who are present. Some of these factors lead to attempts to "win the decision" rather than to find the best solution; other factors lead to moves for prominence or to deference.

Time Constraints

Available time may restrict the group's potential. It simply takes more time for a group to make a decision than it does for a single individual. It also takes a good deal of time for a group to develop the skills and procedures required for effective work—that is, to capitalize on the assets mentioned earlier and to limit the liabilities inherent in any group effort.

Problems with Disagreement

Issues are often sharpened, and therefore clarified, when there are differences or conflicts between members of a group in defining the problem, gaining preferred solutions, obtaining information, or establishing perspectives. However, disagreement affects people differently, and hard feelings between individuals may block the group's progress. Some people experience disagreement as a cue to attack; others react to conflict and controversy by freezing or withdrawing.

When disagreement is well managed, new ideas and innovative solutions are often the outcomes. When differences between people are seen as sources of new information rather than as obstacles to be overcome, solutions tend to be more creative.

Premature Discussion of Solutions

Confusion and conflict occasionally arise over proposed solutions because there is insufficient agreement or clarity concerning the problem. Unwittingly, group members offer different solutions to solve different problems. Both the quality and the acceptance of solutions increase when the seeking of solutions is delayed until both goals and potential obstacles are identified.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

Identifying and mobilizing the resources of a group and overcoming the obstacles to effective group functioning are keys to the group's success. The quality of a group's decision depends on whether the people with the best ideas or those with the worst ideas are more influential. The declaration "Let's get all the facts on the table and then make a decision" is a naïve wish, as the liabilities of groups indicate. Getting all relevant information on the table and assuring that it receives an appropriate hearing is a very difficult task. Once the decision has been made to assign a job to a group of people, the behavior of the group's leader becomes critical to its success. Again, it is important to realize that the leader can do more than anyone else to facilitate or to block effective group functioning.

In problem-solving groups, effective leadership promotes the utilization of all members as relevant resources and ensures open and accurate communication among them. It

is important, therefore, to understand the *leadership dilemma:* the more power a leader has, the more positive contributions he or she can make to a group's functioning and procedures, but also the more the leader's own behavior can be a barrier to the free exchange of ideas. The best solutions come with a *strong* leader working with *strong* group members. In this situation, conflict and disagreement tend to be creative. All resources have the opportunity to be fully utilized when (1) there is two-way initiative between the leader and other group members (not simply two-way communication, but two-way initiative); and (2) responsibilities for leadership activities are shared; provided (3) that the strength of subordinates coupled with their assumption of responsibilities for leadership functions do not threaten the boss.

There are several things required from members of a problem-solving group in which leadership is conceived as a set of *functions* to be performed by anyone seeing the need, rather than as a *role* to be filled by the boss. The more that each of these requirements of effective leadership is shared and performed by all members of a problem-solving group, the more productive and creative that group is likely to be. These functions include encouraging broad participation by bringing others into the discussion and by protecting minority points of view; assuming responsibility for accurate communications between other group members; summarizing progress by pointing out where things stand at the moment; and questioning the appropriateness or the order of agenda items.

The leader can do more than anyone else to create an unintentional "camel" as the group's product and to provoke the attitude that all people who have worked in groups have experienced: "If I can only get through this meeting, then I can get some work done!" On the other hand, the leader can also do more than anyone else to provide the conditions for effective group efforts. Some guidelines for when groups are a good choice and some insights into making those groups function effectively are especially helpful in the day-to-day life of a manager.

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John J. Gabarro and John P. Kotter

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		Reprint Number
6	Growing concerns *Michael G. Berolzheimer*	80102
14	Hire the handicapped—compliance is good business *Gopal C. Pati and John I. Adkins, Jr.*	80108
24	Instilling activism in trustees *Alfred R. Stern*	80109
34	For the manager's bookshelf *Karen B. Tracy*	N.A.
57	The energy outlook: combining the options *Robert Stobaugh and Daniel Yergin*	80110
74	Why read Peter Drucker? *Alan M. Kantrow*	80106
83	Marketing success through differentiation—of anything *Theodore Levitt*	80107
92	Managing your boss *John J. Gabarro and John P. Kotter*	80104
101	Listening and responding to employees' concerns *An interview with A.W. Clausen*	80103
115	Through the organizational looking glass *Charles Handy*	80105
122	New promise of computer graphics *Hirotaka Takeuchi and Allan H. Schmidt*	80112
132	Protecting all employees against unjust dismissal *Clyde W. Summers*	80111
140	Over 49: the invisible consumer market *Rena Bartos*	80101
150	Ideas for action *Jerry L. Roby; Nariman K. Dhalla*	80119

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Managing your boss

A compatible relationship with your superior is essential to being effective in your job

John J. Gabarro and John P. Kotter

Good managers recognize that a relationship with a boss involves mutual dependence and that, if it is not managed well, they cannot be effective in their jobs. They also recognize that the boss-subordinate relationship is not like the one between a parent and a child, in that the burden for managing the relationship should not and cannot fall entirely on the boss. Bosses are only human; their wisdom and maturity are not always greater than their subordinates'. Effective managers see managing the relationship with the boss as part of their job. As a result, they take time and energy to develop a relationship that is consonant with both persons' styles and assets and that meets the most critical needs of each.

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Drawings by Arnie Levin.

To many the phrase *managing your boss* may sound unusual or suspicious. Because of the traditional top-down emphasis in organizations, it is not obvious why you need to manage relationships upward—unless, of course, you would do so for personal or political reasons. But in using the expression *managing your boss*, we are not referring to political maneuvering or apple polishing. Rather we are using the term to mean the process of consciously working with your superior to obtain the best possible results for you, your boss, and the company.

Recent studies suggest that effective managers take time and effort to manage not only relationships with their subordinates but also those with their bosses.[1] These studies show as well that this aspect of management, essential though it is to survival and advancement, is sometimes ignored by otherwise talented and aggressive managers. Indeed, some managers who actively and effectively supervise subordinates, products, markets, and technologies, nevertheless assume an almost passively reactive stance vis-à-vis their bosses. Such a stance practically always hurts these managers and their companies.

If you doubt the importance of managing your relationship with your boss or how difficult it is to do so effectively, consider for a moment the following sad but telling story:

Frank Gibbons was an acknowledged manufacturing genius in his industry and, by any profitability standard, a very effective executive. In 1973, his

1. See, for example, John J. Gabarro, "Socialization at the Top: How CEOs and Their Subordinates Develop Interpersonal Contracts," *Organizational Dynamics*, Winter 1979; and John P. Kotter, *Power in Management*, AMACOM, 1979.

226

strengths propelled him into the position of vice president of manufacturing for the second largest and most profitable company in its industry. Gibbons was not, however, a good manager of people. He knew this, as did others in his company and his industry. Recognizing this weakness, the president made sure that those who reported to Gibbons were good at working with people and could compensate for his limitations. The arrangement worked well.

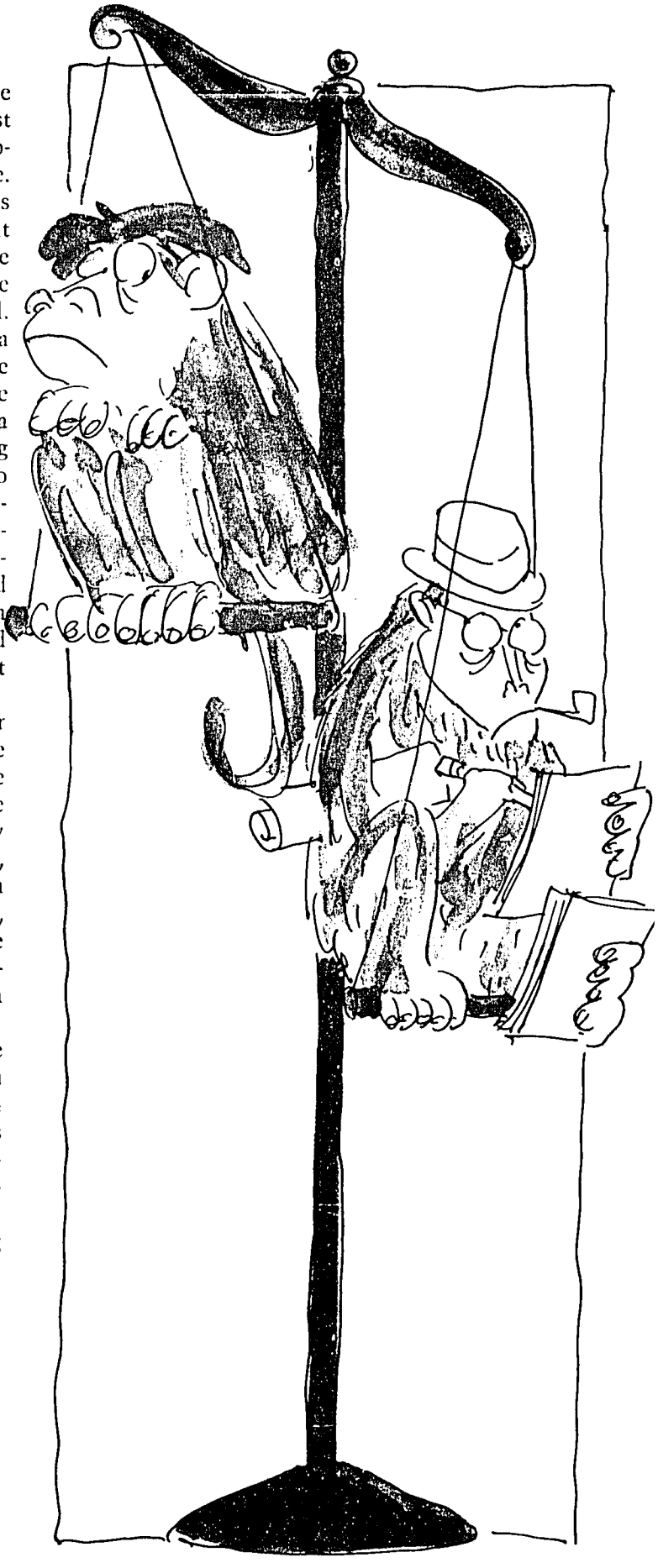
In 1975, Philip Bonnevie was promoted into a position reporting to Gibbons. In keeping with the previous pattern, the president selected Bonnevie because he had an excellent track record and a reputation for being good with people. In making that selection, however, the president neglected to notice that, in his rapid rise through the organization, Bonnevie himself had never reported to anyone who was poor at managing subordinates. Bonnevie had always had good-to-excellent bosses. He had never been forced to manage a relationship with a difficult boss. In retrospect, Bonnevie admits he had never thought that managing his boss was a part of his job.

Fourteen months after he started working for Gibbons, Bonnevie was fired. During that same quarter, the company reported a net loss for the first time in seven years. Many of those who were close to these events say that they don't really understand what happened. This much is known, however: while the company was bringing out a major new product—a process that required its sales, engineering, and manufacturing groups to coordinate their decisions very carefully—a whole series of misunderstandings and bad feelings developed between Gibbons and Bonnevie.

For example, Bonnevie claims Gibbons was aware of and had accepted Bonnevie's decision to use a new type of machinery to make the new product; Gibbons swears he did not. Furthermore, Gibbons claims he made it clear to Bonnevie that introduction of the product was too important to the company in the short run to take any major risks.

As a result of such misunderstandings, planning went awry: a new manufacturing plant was built that could not produce the new product designed by engineering, in the volume desired by sales, at a cost agreed on by the executive committee. Gibbons blamed Bonnevie for the mistake. Bonnevie blamed Gibbons.

Of course, one could argue that the problem here was caused by Gibbons's inability to manage his subordinates. But one can make just as strong a case that the problem was related to Bonnevie's inability to manage his boss. Remember, Gibbons was



not having difficulty with any other subordinates. Moreover, given the personal price paid by Bonnevie (being fired and having his reputation within the industry severely tarnished), there was little consolation in saying the problem was that Gibbons was poor at managing subordinates. Everyone already knew that.

We believe that the situation could have turned out differently had Bonnevie been more adept at understanding Gibbons and at managing his relationship with him. In this case, an inability to manage upward was unusually costly. The company lost $2 to $5 million, and Bonnevie's career was, at least temporarily, disrupted. Many less costly cases like this probably occur regularly in all major corporations, and the cumulative effect can be very destructive.

Misreading the boss-subordinate relationship

People often dismiss stories like the one we just related as being merely cases of personality conflict. Because two people can on occasion be psychologically or temperamentally incapable of working together, this can be an apt description. But more often, we have found, a personality conflict is only a part of the problem—sometimes a very small part.

Bonnevie did not just have a different personality from Gibbons, he also made or had unrealistic assumptions and expectations about the very nature of boss-subordinate relationships. Specifically, he did not recognize that his relationship to Gibbons involved *mutual dependence* between two *fallible* human beings. Failing to recognize this, a manager typically either avoids trying to manage his or her relationship with a boss or manages it ineffectively.

Some people behave as if their bosses were not very dependent on them. They fail to see how much the boss needs their help and cooperation to do his or her job effectively. These people refuse to acknowledge that the boss can be severely hurt by their actions and needs cooperation, dependability, and honesty from them.

Some see themselves as not very dependent on their bosses. They gloss over how much help and information they need from the boss in order to perform their own jobs well. This superficial view is particularly damaging when a manager's job and decisions affect other parts of the organization, as was the case in Bonnevie's situation. A manager's immediate boss can play a critical role in linking the manager to the rest of the organization, in making sure the manager's priorities are consistent with organizational needs, and in securing the resources the manager needs to perform well. Yet some managers need to see themselves as practically self-sufficient, as not needing the critical information and resources a boss can supply.

Many managers, like Bonnevie, assume that the boss will magically know what information or help their subordinates need and provide it to them. Certainly, some bosses do an excellent job of caring for their subordinates in this way, but for a manager to expect that from all bosses is dangerously unrealistic. A more reasonable expectation for managers to have is that modest help will be forthcoming. After all, bosses are only human. Most really effective managers accept this fact and assume primary responsibility for their own careers and development. They make a point of seeking the information and help they need to do a job instead of waiting for their bosses to provide it.

In light of the foregoing, it seems to us that managing a situation of mutual dependence among fallible human beings requires the following:

> That you have a good understanding of the other person and yourself, especially regarding strengths, weaknesses, work styles, and needs.

> That you use this information to develop and manage a healthy working relationship—one which is compatible with both persons' work styles and assets, is characterized by mutual expectations, and meets the most critical needs of the other person. And that is essentially what we have found highly effective managers doing.

Understanding the boss & yourself

Managing your boss requires that you gain an understanding of both the boss and his context as well as your own situation and needs. All managers do this to some degree, but many are not thorough enough.

The boss's world

At a minimum, you need to appreciate your boss's goals and pressures, his or her strengths and weak-

esses. What are your boss's organizational and personal objectives, and what are the pressures on him, especially those from his boss and others at his level? What are your boss's long suits and blind spots? What is his or her preferred style of working? Does he or she like to get information through memos, formal meetings, or phone calls? Does your boss thrive on conflict or try to minimize it?

Without this information, a manager is flying blind when dealing with his boss, and unnecessary conflicts, misunderstandings, and problems are inevitable.

Goals & pressures

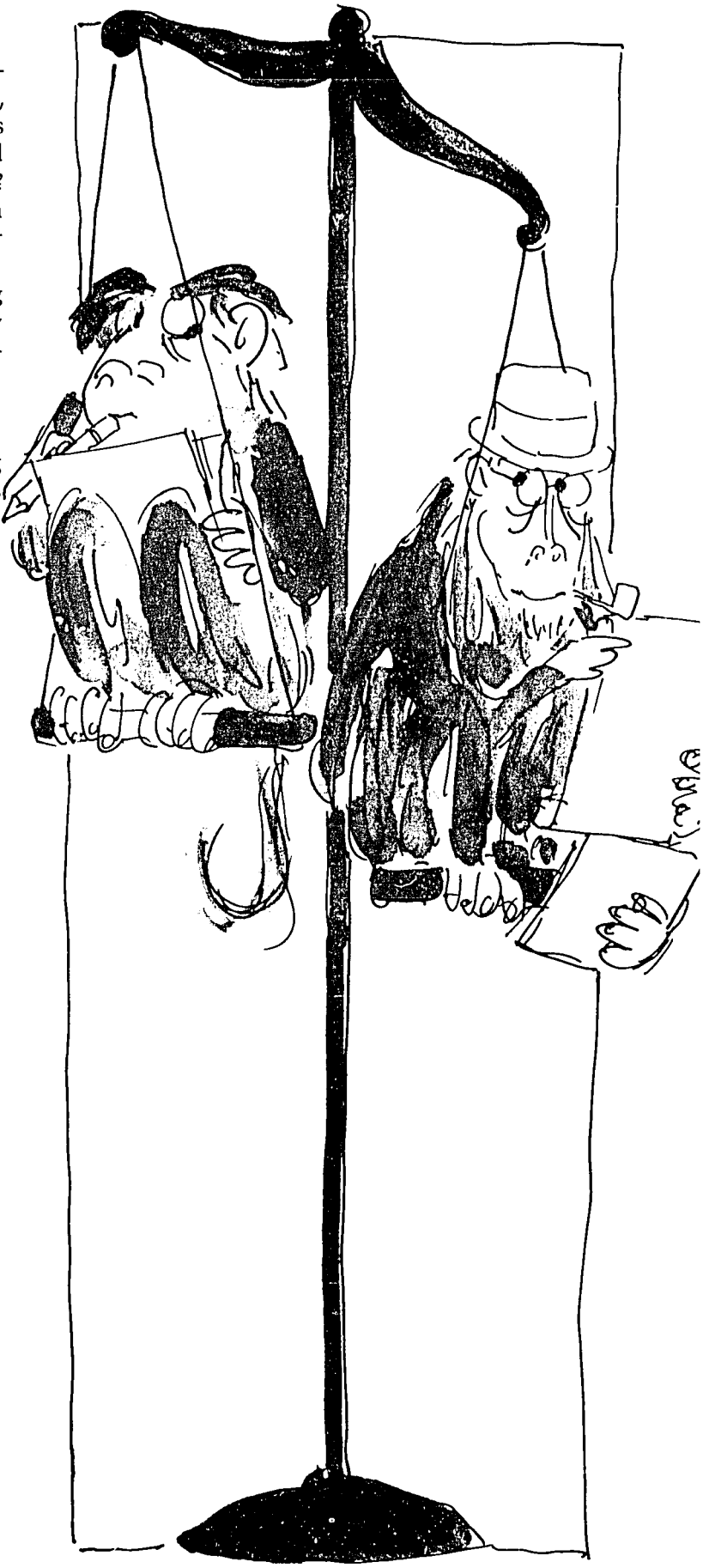
In one situation we studied, a top-notch marketing manager with a superior performance record was hired into a company as a vice president "to straighten out the marketing and sales problems." The company, which was having financial difficulties, had been recently acquired by a larger corporation. The president was eager to turn it around and gave the new marketing vice president free rein—at least initially. Based on his previous experience, the new vice president correctly diagnosed that greater market share was needed and that strong product management was required to bring that about. As a sult, he made a number of pricing decisions aimed at increasing high-volume business.

When margins declined and the financial situation did not improve, however, the president increased pressure on the new vice president. Believing that the situation would eventually correct itself as the company gained back market share, the vice president resisted the pressure.

When by the second quarter margins and profits had still failed to improve, the president took direct control over all pricing decisions and put all items on a set level of margin, regardless of volume. The new vice president began to find himself shut out by the president, and their relationship deteriorated. In fact, the vice president found the president's behavior bizarre. Unfortunately, the president's new pricing scheme also failed to increase margins, and by the fourth quarter both the president and the vice president were fired.

What the new vice president had not known until it was too late was that improving marketing and sales had been only *one* of the president's goals. His most immediate goal had been to make the company more profitable—quickly.

Nor had the new vice president known that his boss was invested in this short-term priority for personal as well as business reasons. The president had been a strong advocate of the acquisition with-



in the parent company, and his personal credibility was at stake.

The vice president made three basic errors. He took information supplied to him at face value, he made assumptions in areas where he had no information, and—most damaging—he never actively tried to clarify what his boss's objectives were. As a result, he ended up taking actions that were actually at odds with the president's priorities and objectives.

Managers who work effectively with their bosses do not behave this way. They seek out information about the boss's goals and problems and pressures. They are alert for opportunities to question the boss and others around him to test their assumptions. They pay attention to clues in the boss's behavior. Although it is imperative they do this when they begin working with a new boss, effective managers also do this on an ongoing basis because they recognize that priorities and concerns change.

Strengths, weaknesses & work style

Being sensitive to a boss's work style can be crucial, especially when the boss is new. For example, a new president who was organized and formal in his approach replaced a man who was informal and intuitive. The new president worked best when he had written reports. He also preferred formal meetings with set agendas.

One of his division managers realized this need and worked with the new president to identify the kinds and frequency of information and reports the president wanted. This manager also made a point of sending background information and brief agendas for their discussions. He found that with this type of preparation their meetings were very useful. Moreover, he found that with adequate preparation his new boss was even more effective at brainstorming problems than his more informal and intuitive predecessor had been.

In contrast, another division manager never fully understood how the new boss's work style differed from that of his predecessor. To the degree that he did sense it, he experienced it as too much control. As a result, he seldom sent the new president the background information he needed, and the president never felt fully prepared for meetings with the manager. In fact, the president spent much of his time when they met trying to get information that he felt he should have had before his arrival. The boss experienced these meetings as frustrating and inefficient, and the subordinate often found himself thrown off guard by the questions that the president asked. Ultimately, this division manager resigned.

The difference between the two division managers just described was not so much one of ability or even adaptability. Rather, the difference was that one of the men was more sensitive to his boss's work style than the other and to the implications of his boss's needs.

You & your needs

The boss is only one-half of the relationship. You are the other half, as well as the part over which you have more direct control. Developing an effective working relationship requires, then, that you know your own needs, strengths and weaknesses, and personal style.

Your own style

You are not going to change either your basic personality structure or that of your boss. But you can become aware of what it is about you that impedes or facilitates working with your boss and, with that awareness, take actions that make the relationship more effective.

For example, in one case we observed, a manager and his superior ran into problems whenever they disagreed. The boss's typical response was to harden his position and overstate it. The manager's reaction was then to raise the ante and intensify the forcefulness of his argument. In doing this, he channeled his anger into sharpening his attacks on the logical fallacies in his boss's assumptions. His boss in turn would become even more adamant about holding his original position. Predictably, this escalating cycle resulted in the subordinate avoiding whenever possible any topic of potential conflict with his boss.

In discussing this problem with his peers, the manager discovered that his reaction to the boss was typical of how he generally reacted to counterarguments—but with a difference. His response would overwhelm his peers, but not his boss. Because his attempts to discuss this problem with his boss were unsuccessful he concluded that the only way to change the situation was to deal with his own instinctive reactions. Whenever the two reached an impasse, he would check his own impatience and suggest that they break up and think about it before getting together again. Usually when they renewed their discussion, they had digested their differences and were more able to work them through.

Gaining this level of self-awareness and acting on it are difficult but not impossible. For example, in reflecting over his past experiences, a young manager learned that he was not very good at dealing

ith difficult and emotional issues where people were involved. Because he disliked those issues and realized that his instinctive responses to them were seldom very good, he developed a habit of touching base with his boss whenever such a problem arose. Their discussions always surfaced ideas and approaches the manager had not considered. In many cases, they also identified specific actions the boss could take to help.

Dependence on authority figures

Although a superior-subordinate relationship is one of mutual dependence, it is also one in which the subordinate is typically more dependent on the boss than the other way around. This dependence inevitably results in the subordinate feeling a certain degree of frustration, sometimes anger, when his actions or options are constrained by his boss's decisions. This is a normal part of life and occurs in the best of relationships. The way in which a manager handles these frustrations largely depends on his or her predisposition toward dependence on authority figures.

Some people's instinctive reaction under these circumstances is to resent the boss's authority and to rebel against the boss's decisions. Sometimes a person will escalate a conflict beyond what is appropriate. Seeing the boss almost as an institutional enemy, this type of manager will often, without being conscious of it, fight with the boss just for the sake of fighting. His reactions to being constrained are usually strong and sometimes impulsive. He sees the boss as someone who, by virtue of his role, is a hindrance to progress, an obstacle to be circumvented or at best tolerated.

Psychologists call this pattern of reactions counterdependent behavior. Although a counterdependent person is difficult for most superiors to manage and usually has a history of strained relationships with superiors, this sort of manager is apt to have even more trouble with a boss who tends to be directive or authoritarian. When the manager acts on his or her negative feelings, often in subtle and nonverbal ways, the boss sometimes *does* become the enemy. Sensing the subordinate's latent hostility, the boss will lose trust in the subordinate or his judgment and behave less openly.

Paradoxically, a manager with this type of predisposition is often a good manager of his own people. He will often go out of his way to get support for them and will not hesitate to go to bat for them.

At the other extreme are managers who swallow their anger and behave in a very compliant fashion when the boss makes what they know to be a poor decision. These managers will agree with the boss even when a disagreement might be welcome or when the boss would easily alter his decision if given more information. Because they bear no relationship to the specific situation at hand, their responses are as much an overreaction as those of counterdependent managers. Instead of seeing the boss as an enemy, these people deny their anger—the other extreme—and tend to see the boss as if he or she were an all-wise parent who should know best, should take responsibility for their careers, train them in all they need to know, and protect them from overly ambitious peers.

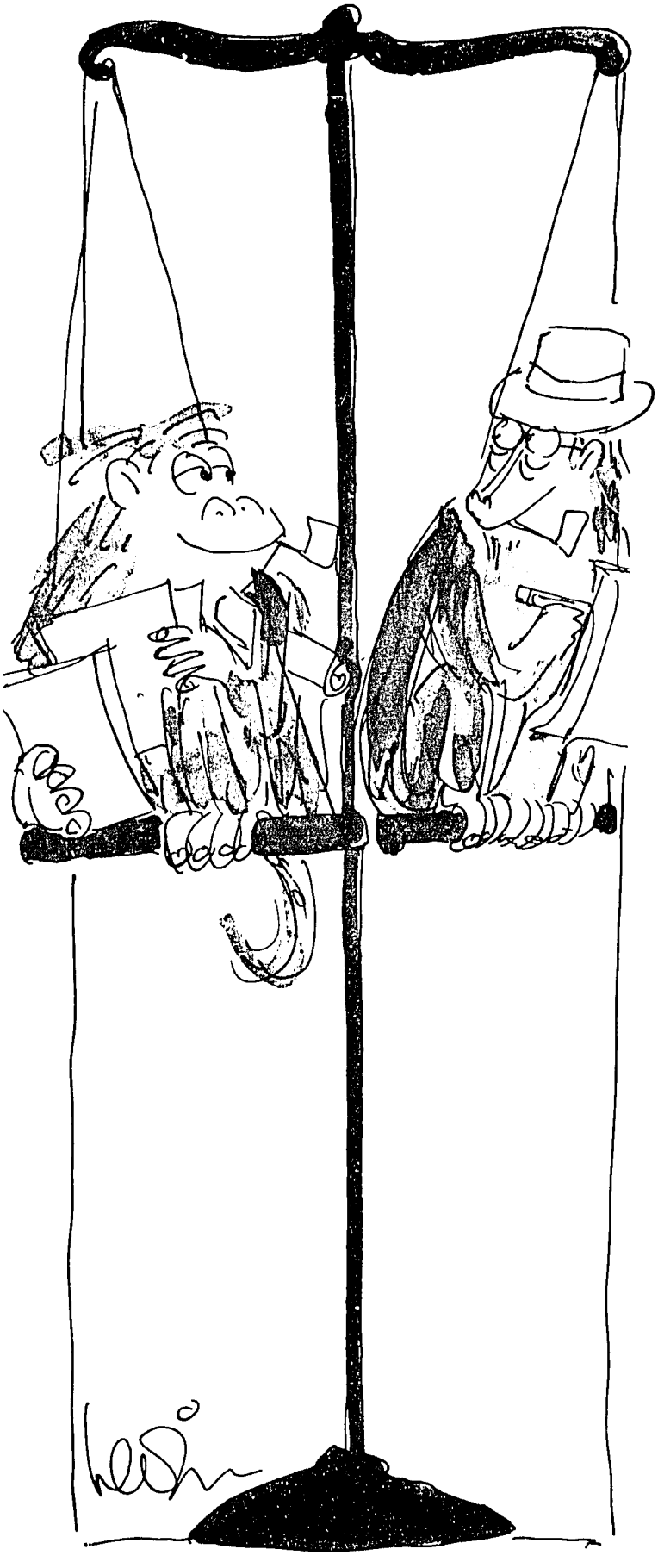
Both counterdependence and overdependence lead managers to hold unrealistic views of what a boss is. Both views ignore that most bosses, like everyone else, are imperfect and fallible. They don't have unlimited time, encyclopedic knowledge, or extrasensory perception; nor are they evil enemies. They have their own pressures and concerns that are sometimes at odds with the wishes of the subordinate—and often for good reason.

Altering predispositions toward authority, especially at the extremes, is almost impossible without intensive psychotherapy (psychoanalytic theory and research suggest that such predispositions are deeply rooted in a person's personality and upbringing). However, an awareness of these extremes and the range between them can be very useful in understanding where your own predispositions fall and what the implications are for how you tend to behave in relation to your boss.

If you believe, on the one hand, that you have some tendencies toward counterdependence, you can understand and even predict what your reactions and overreactions are likely to be. If, on the other hand, you believe you have some tendencies toward overdependence, you might question the extent to which your overcompliance or inability to confront real differences may be making both you and your boss less effective.

Developing & managing the relationship

With a clear understanding of both your boss and yourself, you can—usually—establish a way of working together that fits both of you, that is characterized by unambiguous mutual expectations, and that helps both of you to be more productive and effec-



tive. We have already outlined a few things such relationship consists of, which are itemized in the *Exhibit*, and here are a few more.

Compatible work styles

Above all else, a good working relationship with a boss accommodates differences in work style. For example, in one situation we studied, a manager (who had a relatively good relationship with his superior) realized that during meetings his boss would often become inattentive and sometimes brusque. The subordinate's own style tended to be discursive and exploratory. He would often digress from the topic at hand to deal with background factors, alternative approaches, and so forth. His boss, instead, preferred to discuss problems with a minimum of background detail and became impatient and distracted whenever his subordinate digressed from the immediate issue.

Recognizing this difference in style, the manager became terser and more direct during meetings with his boss. To help himself do this, before meetings with the boss he would develop brief agenda that he used as a guide. Whenever he felt that digression was needed, he explained why. This small shift in his own style made these meetings more effective and far less frustrating for them both.

Subordinates can adjust their styles in response to their bosses' preferred method for receiving information. Peter Drucker divides bosses into "listeners" and "readers." Some bosses like to get information in report form so that they can read and study it. Others work better with information and reports presented in person so that they can ask questions. As Drucker points out, the implications are obvious. If your boss is a listener, you brief him in person, *then* follow it up with a memo. If your boss is a reader, you cover important items or proposals in a memo or report, *then* discuss them with him.

Other adjustments can be made according to a boss's decision-making style. Some bosses prefer to be involved in decisions and problems as they arise. These are high-involvement managers who like to keep their hands on the pulse of the operation. Usually their needs (and your own) are best satisfied if you touch base with them on an ad hoc basis. A boss who has a need to be involved will become involved one way or another, so there are advantages to including him at your initiative. Other bosses prefer to delegate—they don't want to be involved. They expect you to come to them with

ıjor problems and inform them of important ·nanges.

Creating a compatible relationship also involves drawing on each other's strengths and making up for each other's weaknesses. Because he knew that his boss—the vice president of engineering—was not very good at monitoring his employees' problems, one manager we studied made a point of doing it himself. The stakes were high: the engineers and technicians were all union members, the company worked on a customer-contract basis, and the company had recently experienced a serious strike.

The manager worked closely with his boss, the scheduling department, and the personnel office to ensure that potential problems were avoided. He also developed an informal arrangement through which his boss would review with him any proposed changes in personnel or assignment policies before taking action. The boss valued his advice and credited his subordinate for improving both the performance of the division and the labor-management climate.

Exhibit
Managing the relationship with your boss

Make sure you understand your boss and his context, including:
His goals and objectives
The pressures on him
His strengths, weaknesses, blind spots
His preferred work style
Assess yourself and your needs, including:
Your own strengths and weaknesses
Your personal style
Your predisposition toward dependence on authority figures
Develop and maintain a relationship that:
Fits both your needs and styles
Is characterized by mutual expectations
Keeps your boss informed
Is based on dependability and honesty
Selectively uses your boss's time and resources

^Mutual expectations

.e subordinate who passively assumes that he or she knows what the boss expects is in for trouble. Of course, some superiors will spell out their expectations very explicitly and in great detail. But most do not. And although many corporations have systems that provide a basis for communicating expectations (such as formal planning processes, career planning reviews, and performance appraisal reviews), these systems never work perfectly. Also, between these formal reviews expectations invariably change.

Ultimately, the burden falls on the subordinate to find out what the boss's expectations are. These expectations can be both broad (regarding, for example, what kinds of problems the boss wishes to be informed about and when) as well as very specific (regarding such things as when a particular project should be completed and what kinds of information the boss needs in the interim).

Getting a boss who tends to be vague or nonexplicit to express his expectations can be difficult. But effective managers find ways to get that information. Some will draft a detailed memo covering key aspects of their work and then send it to ·ir bosses for approval. They then follow this up .h a face-to-face discussion in which they go over ·ach item in the memo. This discussion often surfaces virtually all of the boss's relevant expectations.

Other effective managers will deal with an inexplicit boss by initiating an ongoing series of informal discussions about "good management" and "our objectives." Still others find useful information more indirectly through those who used to work for the boss and through the formal planning systems in which the boss makes commitments to his superior. Which approach you choose, of course, should depend on your understanding of your boss's style.

Developing a workable set of mutual expectations also requires that you communicate your own expectations to the boss, find out if they are realistic, and influence the boss to accept the ones that are important to you. Being able to influence the boss to value your expectations can be particularly important if the boss is an overachiever. Such a boss will often set unrealistically high standards that need to be brought into line with reality.

A flow of information

How much information a boss needs about what a subordinate is doing will vary significantly depending on the boss's style, the situation he is in, and the confidence he has in the subordinate. But it is not uncommon for a boss to need more information than the subordinate would naturally supply or for the subordinate to think the boss knows more than he really does. Effective managers recognize that

they probably underestimate what the boss needs to know and make sure they find ways to keep him informed through a process that fits his style.

Managing the flow of information upward is particularly difficult if the boss does not like to hear about problems. Although many would deny it, bosses often give off signals that they want to hear only good news. They show great displeasure—usually nonverbally—when someone tells them about a problem. Ignoring individual achievement, they may even evaluate more favorably subordinates who do not bring problems to them.

Nevertheless—for the good of the organization, boss, and subordinate—a superior needs to hear about failures as well as successes. Some subordinates deal with a good-news-only boss by finding indirect ways to get the necessary information to him, such as a management information system in which there is no messenger to be killed. Others see to it that potential problems, whether in the form of good surprises or bad news, are communicated immediately.

Dependability & honesty

Few things are more disabling to a boss than a subordinate on whom he cannot depend, whose work he cannot trust. Almost no one is intentionally undependable, but many managers are inadvertently so because of oversight or uncertainty about the boss's priorities. A commitment to an optimistic delivery date may please a superior in the short term but be a source of displeasure if not honored. It's difficult for a boss to rely on a subordinate who repeatedly slips deadlines. As one president put it (describing a subordinate): "When he's great, he's terrific, but I can't depend on him. I'd rather he be more consistent even if he delivered fewer peak successes—at least I could rely on him."

Nor are many managers intentionally dishonest with their bosses. But it is so easy to shade the truth a bit and play down concerns. Current concerns often become future surprise problems. It's almost impossible for bosses to work effectively if they cannot rely on a fairly accurate reading from their subordinates. Because it undermines credibility, dishonesty is perhaps the most troubling trait a subordinate can have. Without a basic level of trust in a subordinate's word, a boss feels he has to check all of a subordinate's decisions, which makes it difficult to delegate.

Good use of time & resources

Your boss is probably as limited in his store of time, energy, and influence as you are. Every request you make of him uses up some of these resources. For this reason, common sense suggests drawing on these resources with some selectivity. This may sound obvious, but it is surprising how many managers use up their boss's time (and some of their own credibility) over relatively trivial issues.

In one instance, a vice president went to great lengths to get his boss to fire a meddlesome secretary in another department. His boss had to use considerable effort and influence to do it. Understandably, the head of the other department was not pleased. Later, when the vice president wanted to tackle other more important problems that required changes in the scheduling and control practices of the other department, he ran into trouble. He had used up many of his own as well as his boss's blue chips on the relatively trivial issue of getting the secretary fired, thereby making it difficult for him and his boss to meet more important goals.

Whose job is it?

No doubt, some subordinates will resent that on top of all their other duties, they also need to take time and energy to manage their relationships with their bosses. Such managers fail to realize the importance of this activity and how it can simplify their jobs by eliminating potentially severe problems. Effective managers recognize that this part of their work is legitimate. Seeing themselves as ultimately responsible for what they achieve in an organization, they know they need to establish and manage relationships with everyone on whom they are dependent, and that includes the boss.

In addition to the mash and maze of duties managers and supervisors face every day, they are being told they are expected to become *career coaches* for their subordinates.

You Want Me To Do What?

BY PAMELA R. JONES, BEVERLY KAYE AND HUGH R. TAYLOR

Three questions immediately come to mind when one is confronted with the challenge of developing managers and supervisors as "career coaches and counselors."

- What is this thing called "Career Development?"
- Why has it suddenly become such a big part of the manager's job?
- How can human resource development professionals help managers and supervisors learn more about career development and become effective managerial career coaches?

A logical place to start is by looking at the big picture and examining some of the background of the problem.

For much too long career development was seen as a function of the personnel department. It was one of those "activities" offered to newly hired personnel during the orientation process or, occasionally, provided to employees who had questions about their future in the organization. For many, the "coaching" consisted of someone armed with organization charts and job descriptions, showing how various paths might be obtained. The prevailing philosophy often was that if employees worked hard, and showed "promise," it would be possible for them to move ahead in their careers — and to retire on a moderate pension at the end of 30 or 40 years of faithful service.

At best these career opportunity briefings provided some useful information and a pep talk. At worst they created totally unrealistic expectations which, when their Pollyanna optimism became obvious, tended to demotivate workers and send them looking through the want ads for someplace where their actual changes for success were better.

New Approach Needed

Several years ago the counterproductiveness of such an approach to career counseling began to be realized. Instead of reducing employee turnover and increasing productivity, these half-hearted attempts at providing career planning information were accomplishing just the opposite. They were actually destroying initiative and driving people with high potential out of organizations.

As a result, a few people involved in the fields of human resources, management, and organization development began investigating career development as another important HRD activity. To provide data on what was needed to develop the area, they examined the careers of people who had reached the top of their particular fields. It soon became clear that those who succeeded in their given fields showed promise early in their careers, but they were not content to "keep their noses clean" and "work hard." Instead, they attained their success by combining a number of competencies, many of which they were unaware they possessed.

They:

- developed an ability to recognize people with organizational power and clout and became associated with them.
- were able to recognize programs and efforts being carried on by the organization with the potential to gain recognition and became involved with them.
- had a willingness to take risks.
- were innovators, able to think on their feet and always looking for a chance to turn problems into opportunities.
- were politically astute and were able to turn organizational politics to their advantage.
- had the ability to plan ahead, to set goals and objectives and develop the processes to attain them in a timely manner.

In short, the success of these people did not "just happen;" it came about through hard work and political savvy.

For those involved in this kind of investigation, the first thing that was learned from these studies was — there is no such thing as

luck in career planning and development. People who get ahead make their own luck. If others are going to be helped to "make it," they are going to require help in making their "luck" through the development of those competencies necessary for success.

It became apparent that success in career development is the result of individual effort. No single strategy or plan is going to work for a group of people. Everyone has different assets, liabilities, interests, needs, values, desires, goals, and pace for advancement. Therefore, each person will need to individualize the tips they receive.

A Dual Responsibility

There is a dual effort involved in this process, however. While it is the individual's responsibility to try to achieve the level of success desired, the organization has a responsibility to provide the necessary coaching, counseling, personnel structures, and help to make individual goal attainment a reality. The individual nature of the process can pose some rather significant problems.

While it is possible in some organizations to create a central career-development function to give the individual the support and help required, the larger the organization, the more difficult it is for aid to be personalized from a central source. When this occurs, the career development help provided may become ineffective.

Organizations, therefore, have two alternatives: they can employ cadres of career development specialists to be available at all levels and locations in the organization to provide personalized help (a costly endeavor); or, they can involve the people closest to employees as the career coaches . . . the individuals direct manager and supervisor.

General Electric's Nuclear Energy Business Group chose to move in the latter direction and develop the requisite skills for their managers to tackle career coaching. However, this alternative also creates problems. Managers who have little or no training in the field of career development do not see its advantages and importance and, therefore, have little inclination to become involved. They are already involved in a myriad of other tasks and must now take on additional responsibilities, be sold on the importance of them, and trained to carry them out.

The very nature of our managerial selection process, especially in high technology organizations, adds another dimension to this problem. Promotions to managerial positions are largely based on technical proficiency. Even in those organizations with active and ambitious management and organizational development programs, the human relations and interpersonal skills of managers tend to be developed *after* selection for, or promotion to, management positions. As a result, most managers who are going to be providing career-development coaching do not feel qualified to take on such a new and awesome responsibility.

The authors have encountered indications of these negative feelings. In talking with managers in various organizations, who were asked to express their feelings about becoming career coaches for their subordinates, typical responses have been:

- "That seems to me a little like playing God."
- "I would have no idea what questions to ask. What in the world do I do when the person I'm helping just sits there? How do I deal with silence?"
- "Give them options? What options? The only way to get ahead is to get into management. If someone doesn't want to go that way, they're out of luck!"
- "I chat with my people during their performance appraisals about their career goals; that should be enough."

In most of the interviews conducted, managers felt career coaching was desirable, but did not feel they were the people to give it. Even the prospect of a special training program for managers to develop career-coaching skills and capabilities was met with skepticism.

Why do managers have this fear of becoming involved in the careers of their subordinates and doubts about their own abilities to conduct career coaching?

Different Strokes

As previously noted, originally hired for technical potential, motion to management/supervisory positions comes to many people as a result of demonstrated technical proficiency. This is true in many professions, not just those in so-called high technology organizations.

Administrative managers, for example, are selected from the ranks of the most technically proficient accountants, bookkeepers, secretaries, etc. Manufacturing managers are chosen because of their ability to operate equipment, coordinate production lines, or solve equipment and flow problems. Construction supervisors are selected for their positions because of their mastery of the functions of their trade, seniority, and success in keeping track of materials and work progress. Very seldom, if ever, are managers and supervisors chosen because of their ability to relate to people and lead them.

If we were to follow the natural progression of people along the rungs of the "ladder of success" we would see them go from:

Beginning Learner — The newly hired individuals who must work with others and learn. They go through a period of becoming familiar with the aspects of their jobs and the manner in which they are conducted in a particular organization. This is done so that they might become an . . .

Individual Contributor — Those who have gained sufficient knowledge, expertise, and skill to be able to work alone with minimal supervision and guidance. Those who excel in this phase are promoted to . . .

Manager or Supervisor — Now they must know how to exercise leadership, human relations, interpersonal, and problem solving skills totally unrelated to their technical expertise.

But at this level the amount of technical proficiency required for the job decreases while the amount of human relations and interpersonal proficiency required suddenly increases.

There is another factor to be considered at this point: *not everyone wants to manage other people.* This statement presents nothing new to human resource development professionals, but it often comes as a shock to those in the organization charged with locating and recognizing potential comers to promote into managerial openings.

There are any number of people in management today who would have been much happier staying in their technical areas as an individual contributor. A great many of those people felt, when the opportunity to move into management was presented, it was a case of up or out.

Others looked at their career prospects and saw that unless they made the transition into management there was just no place to go; no "dual track" was available which would allow upward mobility solely within the technical field. (It is sad to note there are many "technical gypsies" floating around organizations today. These unfortunates are those who possess a great deal of technical proficiency, but will leave one organization to take a lesser job with another rather than move into management. Some will go even before the offer is made because they do not want to be seen as "non-managerial material" even though that is how they see themselves.)

A great many technical specialists who have suddenly found themselves in managerial positions feel resentful about their careers. They feel ripped off. They worked hard to develop their technical proficiency and the reward they receive — they no longer practice their craft, instead they manage!

Obviously this is not true of all people promoted into management. A great many, perhaps even the majority, want to move into management; they set their sights on managerial careers and are elated when the opportunity to move into the leadership structure of the organization presents itself.

Does this mean the latter group is superior to the former? Are these people more enlightened? Certainly not! They have different values and outlooks, but they are not superior or more knowledgeable than those who prefer to stay in their technical area. They have made different choices and when it comes to advising others they will have a different set of values and biases from which they will do their coaching.

Develop Thy People

Now, into this situation steps the human resource development professional with the organization's new edict: "We want our managers to become career coaches to their subordinates."

Reactions to this announcement differ. One group hears this and thinks, "Ah yes, I am to coach my employees to go into management. That's where I am, and furthermore, it's the only way to get ahead in this organization. Management is where the action is. And I want my employees to enjoy the same success I have."

The other group, however, thinks, "Boy, will I coach them! I made a big mistake by going into management and I'll certainly see they don't make the same error. I'll help them avoid being ripped off and pulled away from their technical area."

Unfortunately, those who would make good managers do not have a large "M" emblazoned on their foreheads, nor do those with the technical orientation have a "T" on theirs.

How, then, do human resource development professionals help managers give unbiased coaching which will allow subordinates to make appropriate career choices?

G.E.'s Nuclear Energy Business Group's approach is to begin by sensitizing it's management to the fact that essentially all manager-employee conversations have some aspects of career development associated with the discussion. Be it related to the employee's potential in the organization, another job offer, moving to another company location, or just generally responding to the employee's need for feedback on his/her performance.

Through a one-day intensive workshop titled "Managing Career Conversations," managers begin to explore various aspects of the career development process and learn to communicate with employees more effectively through the use of "Eight Rules of Straight Talk" developed by Walter D. Storey of the General Electric Company.

A valuable next step is to confront the dual career ladder concern and let potential managerial career coaches begin to get in touch with their own feelings on the pros and cons, the benefits and liabilities, of the two options. Explore how each individual views the managerial path as opposed to the technical individual contributor route. What organizational rewards are offered by each ladder? Are these rewards equitable? What personal benefits are to be obtained from each possible route? What tradeoffs will have to be made — both personal and professional?

Figure 1.

Competency	Importance for: Mgrs.	Techs
1. Command of Basic Facts	Med	High
2. Relevant Professional Knowledge	Med	High
3. Continuing Sensitivity to Events	High	Med
4. Problem-solving, Analytical, and Decision/Judgment-making Skills	High	High
5. Social Skills and Abilities	High	Low
6. Emotional Resilience	High	Low
7. Proactivity-Inclination to Respond Purposefully to Events	High	High
8. Creativity	Med	High
9. Mental Agility	Med	Med
10. Balanced Learning Habits and Skills	Med	Med
11. Self-knowledge	High	Low

In reflecting on these considerations, General Electric managers had these thoughts about some of the benefits and trade-offs of selecting the management route:

Benefit

- Broadened work scope (power, influence, authority, status).
- Greater growth opportunity (challenges, position level, money, responsibilities).
- Increased capability to accomplish tasks.
- Being "in the know," i.e., more aware of information about the organization as a whole; its goals/impending changes.

Tradeoff

- Lack of depth in technical expertise.
- Lack of identification with work.
- Heavier time demands.
- Increasingly difficult decisions.
- Diminished technical expertise.
- Difficult to plan work day.

One approach in helping managers discuss these options with their subordinates is to work with them to develop questions to use in identifying subordinates' career orientations. Questions along the following lines will quickly allow even an inexperienced manager to zero in on what is important to subordinates:

- Tell me about the time when you really felt you made a significant contribution to this organization. What turned you on about the experience? What organization rewards did you receive from the experience?

How did it make you feel when the situation was mentioned later on?

- Suppose you were given the opportunity to choose between finding a new solution to a tricky problem, setting up a work place solely for yourself, or inspiring group to work together as a team Which would you choose? Why?
- An opportunity presents itself to develop something entirely new for the organization. If you succeed you will be assured of a lifetime job, but if you fail you could be fired immediately. Would you take the opportunity? Why?

It is possible a person might have an orientation in one direction, but not possess the skills necessary to pursue goals along that line. For this reason, trainers must be prepared to help managers learn how to coach subordinates in the recognition of their current skills, those necessary for the job(s) they desire, and develop a plan to fill in the experience/knowledge gap if one exists.

Critical Competencies

The choice of career ladders will change the emphasis that various skill areas receive. As a person advances up the technical individu contributor ladder the technic and conceptual skills required become more and more specialized and abstract while the interpersonal and human relations skills

tend to remain fairly much one-on-one and one-on-group in nature. This occurs because the technical individual contributor must become more and more of a specialist in order to advance and must be able to explain ideas, needs and directions to individuals and groups in order to obtain the resources necessary for success.

On the other hand, those who choose to advance up the managerial ladder will find conceptually they must become generalists, moving from specific problem solving to problem avoidance and long-term planning. Human relations and interpersonal skills also change from one-on-one to intra-group, to inter-group, to intra-organizational, to inter-organizational as the scope and breadth of their control increases. Views of the job also change from narrow individual orientations to those which are wider and more global. Any dissonance between goals and orientations and skill preference will cause frustration and anxiety.

In a recent workshop with managers (at General Electric's Nuclear Energy Business Group) the authors presented participants with 11 managerial competencies (Pedler/Burgoyne/Boydell, 1978) and asked them to rate their relative importance for managers and those who choose to follow the technical individual contributor ladder. Figure 1, though it represents a consensual conclusion from a group far too small to establish it as any scientific truth, is interesting to note.

In Figure 1, these managers, all of whom had entered the organization as high technology specialists, felt a major shift in emphasis takes place when one enters the managerial ranks. Even though they felt both ladders had an equal emphasis in the problem-solving, analytical, and decision/judgment-making skill areas, they felt the type of expertise required and the nature of the emphasis shifted upon entering the managerial area. This shift was away from the technical and toward the people/organizational problem solving orientation.

These managers felt the shift from low to high in the areas of social skills and abilities and emotional resilience would probably present the greatest problems of adjustment for the technical individual contributor making the transition to management. A scientist, technician, or individual worker does not have a continual demand to inter-relate with others. Nor do individual contributors have to be able to spring back from defeat and setback and be able to deal with others without showing frustration and/or anger. Nothing in these peoples' technical education prepares them for such sudden and dramatic shifts in feelings and emotions. They have to learn to make these shifts unless they have been blessed with some rare inborn resilience.

Enter Managerial Career Coaching — MC^2

Trainers who have brought managers to this point of awareness of the scope of managerial career coaching are now faced with perhaps the biggest task in the whole process.

Managers now realize just how big the problem really is. Invariably, at this point, they begin asking questions such as:

- How in the world do I help my people develop these skills?
- How do I help them find out if they want to make the transition from individual contributors to manager?
- What do they do if they try to make the shift and find that they don't like it? Will they blame me?
- Where can they get help in determining just exactly what skills and expertise are needed for the job they want?

It is apparent that for a career development program to be effective, an organization must have a means for participants to learn new skills, develop new competencies, and become involved in new programs. If career development operates apart from the other training and development and personnel functions of the organization and does not tie into programs already in place, the wheel is going to continually be reinvented. Those involved in the development of MC^2 skills within the organization must have ready access to other skill training programs available, be ready to work with other organization professionals to create programs to meet new needs, and be ready to inform managers what is available and where it can be obtained.

Managers also need to be encouraged to seek out new options and methodologies to help their people in the exploration of career possibilities. For instance, for employees who feel their best opportunities for career enhancement might lie in another part of the organization, HRD professionals might suggest that managers work out job rotation programs with their counterparts in other departments. Employees can then be given a chance to test the waters in other areas of the organization. If they find they like the other area(s) better, horizontal shifts could be offered.

Another possibility might be to allow employees, who are unsure of whether they want to move into

management, to undertake a trial period in a managerial position during which their individual contributor position would be held open for them. If they determine management is not for them, they can move back into the technical area without the feelings of embarrassment normally associated with a demotion. There would be no stigma of failure since it was a trial period for the *individual* to determine the future course of events.

Pre-management orientation and development workshops which would familiarize potential managers with pros and cons of management *before* they are called upon to make the choice of whether to move in that direction is another alternative.

Mentorship programs can also be useful in helping employees who are considering a change to other positions. Experienced managers, established in other parts of the organization and fully aware of the problems, opportunities, and political structures involved, could be asked to make themselves available to provide one-on-one counseling and guidance.

"Shooting Ahead of the Duck"

For everyone contemplating a move within an organization, lateral, vertical, downward, or whatever, it is of utmost importance that trainers take into consideration the principle of leading the target or, as the authors call it, "Shooting Ahead of the Duck."

Anyone who has ever engaged in any sort of target shooting, whether it be archery, pistols, rifles, shotguns, or slingshots, this is "Shooting at the Duck." Although the miss will not be as great as in the case of shooting behind the duck, the aspirant will still not get to where the job will be in the three to five years that it takes to reach it.

The alternative to these two methods is to take into account how fast the job is moving and changing, how quickly the individual can be prepared for the job, and when the job will be available — the speed and direction of the target, the velocity of the projectile, and the range — and prepare the aspirant to "Shoot Ahead of the Duck."

Experienced hunters and target shooters lead their targets instinctively and when asked how they manage to get so many hits shrug their shoulders and reply "Luck." When aiming at a moving job target and preparing for where it will be three to five years in the future one cannot rely on luck. Something more reliable, especially for the novice "job shooter," is required. We call this method or aiming "Future Scan."

Scanning requires the future aspirant to look at where the job is, what it presently consists of and what is required of the incumbent; where the job has come from, what changes have taken place in the job over the last several years; and where the job is going, e.g., the technological, environmental, and organizational changes which are or might have an effect on the job during the "time of flight" of the aspirant to the target.

Oftentimes determination of the direction an organization is going to take is difficult because management is reluctant to reveal too much of their future planning lest the competition be given advantageous information. This should not be used as an excuse for not leading the duck, however. Every organization has people who have an accurate feel for the direction and nature of changes which can be expected. Future Scan consists of gathering information from every source, drawing some educated guesses and conclusions, and making an effort to intercept the job at the future point.

No matter how accurate the information gained by the aspirants in their initial Future Scan, course corrections are going to be necessary as they move toward their target. A space station does not lift off and proceed directly to its rendezvous. There is not a single moment in the flight of the rocket that corrections of some magnitude are not being made.

Managers involved in the launching of subordinates toward career goals need to follow the same process if their aspirants are going to hit their job targets. They can begin by making certain employee initially aim ahead of the target and then, once enroute, it becomes the job of managerial career coaches to help subordinates update their information and make the necessary alterations to their plans to ensure continuation toward a rendezvous with their desired jobs.

It would be well for trainers and managers to remember that organizations are reluctant to place obsolete people in dynamic jobs. Those who shoot at, or behind the duck, and do not make the proper and timely course corrections during their movement toward jobs, tend to be obsolete by the time they reach their destination. "Shooting Ahead of the Duck" and keeping on course will help avoid career obsolescence.

Keeping the Energy In the MC^2 Equation

The job of the HRD professional does not end with the design of another workshop. If anything, it only begins at that point.

As managers are the points of continual career development contact for employees, trainers are the point of contact for managers. If the kick-off program is successful and managers are enthusiastically involved in the career-coaching effort, they will continue to need encouragement and occasional refreshing in some of the techniques learned.

Specific areas where continued help and guidance are going to be required from HRD professionals include:

- The development of assessment instruments by which subordinates' skills, values, and interests can be determined.
- The establishment of training experiences, both in special workshops and on-the-job that develop the competencies deemed necessary for both "tracks."
- The provision of materials and resources to aid subordinates in their goal setting.
- The dissemination of information that can help subordinates continue to study the organization, determine political climates, opportunity areas, and informal norms and communication sys-

tems, etc., which might help or hinder career development efforts.

• The design of techniques for setting effective, realistic deadlines and milestones, establishing monitoring and progress measuring systems, developing action plans, and determining when course corrections should be made.

• The establishment of support systems through which managers can compare notes and share experiences, before they become discouraged and/or lose interest in the program.

Trainers must be prepared to conduct follow-on and follow-up sessions, not necessarily as a means to evaluate the success of the program, but to keep it alive and dynamic.

Some of the initial follow-on sessions may be devoted primarily to problem solving and hand holding as managers grope to find their way. Eventually these sessions will change from helping meetings to ones in which success stories are shared. Instead of asking for "how to" information, managers will begin requesting additional techniques and advanced state-of-the-art information to try. When this occurs, trainers may rest assured that they have put the maximum "E" for *Energy* into the program and the source of the "E" for MC^2 has shifted to the managerial career coaches.

Get Ready, Get Set . . .

The importance of career development as an integral part of the organization's overall HRD effort cannot be overemphasized. Because of the very personal nature of career planning and development, it is essential employees receive individual coaching from those who have observed their work. Managers are the logical choice for this coaching, counseling, and helping function.

Before managers can provide career coaching to their subordinates, they must have adequate preparation. Managers cannot be expected to plunge into the career development effort armed only with their own experience and the knowledge of their own careers as a base. These "coaches-to-be" need coaching themselves. They need to feel that they are ready to help their people. Managers have to feel good about their own career patterns and their coaching skills before they can be expected to provide guidance to others.

It is difficult for HRD professionals to tell if the organization's managers are ready to fulfill their roles as career coaches. When the managers *feel* ready, when their comfort level is set, the time has come for them to GO. At that time, the trainer can sit back and watch the *Energy* from the MC^2 program flow to create greater productivity, reduced turnover, and increased development of people from within the organization.

HOW DO YOU RATE AS AN MC^2?

This quiz will help managers examine their knowledge of the career coaching function and help them to discover those areas in which some skill building may be necessary. Rate your knowledge, skill, and confidence as a Managerial Career Coach by scoring yourself on a scale of 0 (low) to 10 (high) on each of the following statements.

____ 1. I am aware of how career orientations and life stages can influence a person's perspective and contribute to career planning problems.

____ 2. I understand my own career choices and changes and feel good enough about what I have done to be able to provide guidance to others.

____ 3. I am aware of my own biases about dual career paths and feel that I can avoid these biases in coaching others to make a decision on which way to go with their careers.

____ 4. I am aware of how my own values influence my point of view and recognize the importance of helping others to define their values and beliefs so they are congruent with career goals.

____ 5. I am aware of the pitfalls of "Shooting Behind the Duck," and try to keep myself well informed about my organization so I can show others how to "Shoot Ahead of the Duck."

____ 6. I know the norms existing within my own department as well as those within other departments and parts of the organization so I can help others deal with them effectively.

____ 7. I understand the organizational reward system (non-monetary) well enough to help others make informed decisions about career goals, paths, and plans.

____ 8. I have access to a variety of techniques I can use to help others articulate their skills, set goals, and develop action plans to realize their career decisions.

____ 9. I am informed on the competencies required for career success in this organization in both the managerial and technical areas so I can advise others on the particular skills they need to build upon, and how to go about developing that expertise.

____ 10. I feel confident enough about my own skills as a career coach that I can effectively help my people with their problems and plans and make "mid-course" corrections when necessary.

SCORING:

Add up your score and rate yourself against the following scale:

0-30 It might be a good idea if you found *yourself* a career coach.

31-60 Some of your people are receiving help from you . . . however, do you know how many and which ones are not?

61-80 You're a Coach! You may not be ready for the big league yet, but you are providing help for your people.

81-100 Others have a lot to learn from you. You understand the importance of MC^2 and you know how to provide it.

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