TITLE: "BRYCE'S CRASH COURSE IN MANAGEMENT"

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"If we lived in perfect world, there wouldn't be a need for managers. However, the reality is, we live in an imperfect world."
- Bryce's Law

INTRODUCTION

There is an old joke whereby a new manager had been hired by a company to take over an operation. As the new manager was moving into his office he happened to bump into his predecessor who was preparing to leave. The new manager asked if there was any advice the former manager could offer on assuming his duties. The former manager said he had written down advice for his successor and placed them in three envelopes in the desk marked "1," "2," and "3", and that they should only be opened in the event of an emergency. The new manager laughed, shrugged it off, and went about his business thinking nothing about the envelopes.

The manager's reign started off fine but inevitably ran into a problem for which he had no solution. Desperate, he happened to remember the three envelopes and opened Number 1 which offered the following advice: *"Blame your predecessor."* The manager thought this was a clever way to get himself off the hook and used it to good effect.

Time went by until the manager was faced with another seemingly impossible hurdle. Not knowing what to do, he turned to envelope Number 2 containing a note that read simply: *"Reorganize."* The manager thought this was a sound idea and set about reorganizing his operation. Organization charts were redrawn, job descriptions modified, and new office furniture and equipment obtained.

The reorganization overcame the manager's problem but he eventually ran into a crisis taxing his abilities as a manager. At a total loss as to what to do, the manager turned in desperation to envelope Number 3 which included a note that read, *"Prepare three envelopes."*

Laugh as we might to this anecdote, there is a bit of truth in it. Too often people rise above their level of competency to take on the job of manager. Let me give you an example; in the Information Technology field, the first job a college graduate typically assumes in this area is that of a programmer. As time progresses and the programmer excels in his duties, he is promoted to senior programmer, to analyst, to supervisor, then to manager. In this particular scenario, the manager is still a programmer in sheep's clothing. The point is, people are too often given the title of manager without any knowledge or skills in how to do their job. Companies are quick to spend a lot on the latest technological gizmo, but little on management.

Consequently, this is a guide for those of you aspiring to become a manager or have recently been promoted to a management position and are at a loss as to how to implement your duties. This is not necessarily a guide for someone with a fast-track mentality and only see your job as nothing more than a mere steppingstone on your career path. Then again, maybe this is for you after all. If you prove yourself to be a productive manager, new opportunities will present themselves to you. But make no mistake, the lessons inculcated herein are not suited for someone with a "quick and dirty" mindset but, rather, for someone conscientious about their job.

ASSUMING RESPONSIBILITY

There is more to management than a fancy new job title, a new office, and all of the other perks accompanying it. These trappings may be nice, but they are not being given to you just because you are a nice fellow, you are expected to earn them. More than anything, management is about responsibility. Whereas the individual worker is only concerned about himself, the manager is responsible to his superiors to implement policy and get a job done, and; to his subordinates who depend on his judgment and abilities. If you do not have the mental acuity to accept responsibility, then being a manager is not for you. Its better you recognize this now before it is too late. As an example, I have a friend who is an expert craftsman working for a machine-tool company in Cincinnati. His skill and workmanship caught the eye of senior management who promoted him to manager in the hopes he could properly guide the junior workers. Unfortunately, becoming a manager was unnerving to him. Now, instead of just worrying about producing a

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quality product himself, he had to worry about the work of employees under him. This was more than he could handle and he developed an ulcer. The stress was simply too much for him and he asked to return to the ranks of the workmen. To his credit, he understood his limitations. Unfortunately, many do not and try to bluff their way through their career. Sometimes they get caught, many times they do not.

KNOW THE BUSINESS

The first thing you should know as a manager is the business of your company and where you fit in its scheme. Years ago, my father was hired by the Quaker Oats Company in Chicago as MIS Director. During his first few weeks, he took a crash course in how Quaker's business worked. He saw everything from the manufacturing of cereals and cookies to the production of dog food (Ken-L Ration). By going through this indoctrination, he came away with an understanding of how the business worked and who his department would have to serve.

Too often managers and employees lose sight of the company's purpose and overall direction. If the company's mission is forgotten or misunderstood, then there is a tendency for areas in the company to work at odds with the rest of the company. This, of course, is counterproductive. For example, I have seen far too many people in Information Technology departments who honestly believe the business of their company was programming and not the delivery of the products or services offered by the company. In order to adequately serve the company, it is essential a manager expand his horizon and take a more global look at the business.

To properly understand a business, a manager should know:

* The products and/or services offered by the company.
* How the business is organized and who is responsible for what.
* What the company's current priorities are.
* The company's marketplace. This includes the types of customers it serves, the competitors it does battle with, and the vendors/suppliers it works with.
* The operating policies of the company (e.g., Policy Manual).
* The corporate culture in terms of expressed or implied acceptable forms of behavior (social structure).

The Japanese refer to this broader perspective as thinking in "360 Degrees." In other words, in an age of specialization, it is wise to be aware of the total picture of the business, thereby understanding the influential factors affecting you.

RUN YOUR DEPARTMENT LIKE A BUSINESS

Although the manager will have responsibility over only a portion of the business (be it a division, department or a group) it is wise to think of your area as an autonomous business. This is not to suggest developing a maverick attitude in opposition to corporate objectives and culture, but for organizational purposes. By assuming the role of a separate business entity, the manager is more inclined to exercise good judgment, focus on the necessary work effort, consider risks, and develop an entrepreneurial spirit.

Establishing your "business" begins with a thorough understanding of the products and/or services your area is required to produce and the processes needed to produce them. This will not necessarily be the same products and/or services as commercially offered by the company, but rather components of them. Regardless of their magnitude, think of them as the "finished goods" your business is responsible for producing. From this viewpoint, we can begin to measure production (your department's own GNP).

Just as it is important to know the company's business, it is important for the manager to understand his department's business in order to properly operate within its scope. This includes:

* Knowing the products and/or services to be produced by the department along with the processes required to produce them.
* Knowing your customers (to better serve them).
* Knowing your vendors (to better serve you).
* Knowing your lateral working relationships within the company so that you understand your department's alliances and how to work with them.

To establish your "business" you need three things:

1. **Defined Infrastructure** - as represented by a simple organization chart and associated job descriptions.

2. **Financial operating budget.** In this regard, the ability to use spreadsheets should be considered a prerequisite for the job of manager. Devising a budget is relatively easy, adhering to it is another matter altogether.

3. **Take stock of your human and machine resources** so you know the availability and capability of your

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resources. A Skills Inventory is invaluable for cataloging resources, along with their skills and proficiencies. It can also highlight weaknesses requiring training or supplemental resources. Also, a Project Management (PM) system is useful for studying resource allocations and monitoring activities.

For additional information, see:

Number 15 - *"Creating a Skills Inventory"* - Mar 14, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss050311.pdf

"PRIDE" Project Management
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/pride/pm.htm

A Human Resources department can also offer assistance in this regards.

These three items (Infrastructure, Budget, and Inventory) are useful for establishing the scope and boundary of the department, as well as the parameters you will be operating under.

Finally, understand the owners of your business and its board of directors as represented by your superiors and perhaps lateral relationships. By thinking in terms of an autonomous business you will become more self-sufficient and become more conscious of serving your customers.

YOUR THREE PRIME DUTIES

As manager you have three prime duties to perform: Provide Leadership, Establish the proper work Environment, and Produce/Deliver your products or services.

1. LEADERSHIP

As the field general for his department, the manager should be able to articulate the objectives of his area, and the strategy for conquering them. In other words, he has to have a vision and be able to effectively communicate it to his subordinates in order to instill confidence and provide a sense of direction. People like to know where they are going and appreciate some direction in their lives. As social creatures, we take comfort in knowing we are working in a concerted manner towards common objectives we deem important. As such, not only does a manager need a vision, he must be able to convince his workers of its necessity. If the workers believe in the manager's vision and are confident in his ability to lead them, they will gladly follow him.

Following this, the manager must be able to develop practical project plans for the staff to follow (e.g., work breakdown structures and dependencies, and priorities). These project plans should be explained to the staff along with their rationale. By doing so, workers cannot claim they didn't know the plan or what their role was in it. Think of the game of football where plays are called for the eleven players on the field; all are given assignments to perform towards a common objective. If any one player doesn't know the plan, in all likelihood he will make a wrong move and cause the team to lose yardage. As my football coach was fond of saying, *"A team is as strong as its weakest player."* Planning requires communications which ultimately leads to teamwork and harmony. To this end, keep your project plans and calendars up-to-date and visible to everyone in the department.

In any given area of a business you will find projects that are similar or repetitious in nature. For example, processing an order, building a product, etc. All are based on standard and accepted processes performed time and again. As such, documenting standard methodologies for use as templates can materially assist in expediting project planning. Further, consistent work effort leads to measurable and uniform results, as well as providing a standard and consistent line of communications between project personnel. The use of defined and reusable methodologies is also encouraged by standards organizations, such as ISO-9000.

In order for the manager to instill a sense of confidence in the staff, he must not only be able to demonstrate he knows what he is talking about, he must also express a high level of moral conduct. The manager's word should be considered his bond. If he is caught in a lie, cheating, defrauding, back stabbing, or some other misconduct, this will be noticed by the staff who will no longer trust him. A true manager is a person of integrity.

Finally, beware of becoming a "reactionary" manager whereby you simply go from one problem to another as they occur. Under this scenario, the manager is not in control of his department's destiny and has to dance to the tune of someone else's fiddle. Some reactionary management will inevitably be necessary, but take control over your environment and practice more "proactive" management as opposed to "reactive" management. Too often people are lulled into a reactive mode of operation or as we refer to it, a "fire fighting mode" of operating. As a manager, you are cautioned to beware of your chief firefighters, they are probably your chief arsonists as well. Also remember the old adage, "If you don't make the decision, the decision will be made for

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you." Control your destiny: take a proactive approach to management.

2. ENVIRONMENT

The astute manager will appreciate the need for cultivating the proper work environment. If a worker feels comfortable in his environment, he will feel amenable to working and will take a more positive view of his job. But if a "sweat shop" environment is provided, the worker will dread coming to work and put forth minimal effort to accomplish his job.

There are two dimensions for creating a work environment: logical and physical. The physical aspect is somewhat easier to explain and involves the facilities and equipment used in the business, both of which impact morale and attitudes towards work. How people behave in a clean and contemporary facility is noticeably different than those working under dingy and antiquated conditions. Whereas the former supports a professional attitude, the latter promotes a lackadaisical attitude. Basically, a clean and contemporary work place is saying to the employees, *"I care about you and am willing to invest in you."* However, the economic reality may be you cannot afford the latest "state-of-the-art" facilities or equipment. Nonetheless, you should make an effort to keep your physical surroundings as clean and up-to-date as possible. As an example, the military typically operates under a philosophy whereby you either work on something, store it away, or dispose of it. This forces people to be organized. There are those who would argue *"a cluttered desk is the sign of a brilliant mind."* Nothing could be further from the truth. A cluttered desk represents laziness and disorganization. People, particularly customers, prefer an orderly workplace. Think about it next time you go to a grocery store.

The point is, our physical surroundings affect our attitudes towards our work. For example, I know of a print shop with a manager who insists on keeping it spotless. Their paper products are packaged and shipped promptly, inventory is well stocked and maintained, waste is disposed of immediately, and the machines are routinely cleaned and kept in pristine form. Further, the printers are dressed in uniform jumpsuits to keep ink and chemicals from soiling their clothes underneath. Contrast this with the typical print shop that is often cluttered with debris and the machines are infrequently cleaned. The printers of the "clean" shop have a much more positive and professional attitude regarding their work than other printers working in "dirty" shops. Further, absenteeism is not a problem in the "clean" shop and the printers are proud

of the products they produce. Basically, they see their workplace as an extension of their home and treat it as such.

As a footnote, I asked the manager of the print shop why his printers kept the facility so clean when others were so dirty. He jokingly confided in me, *"They don't know any better."* In reality, the manager had set operating standards and routinely inspected the premises to assure they were adhered to. Over time, it became a natural part of the print shop's culture and now he rarely has to inspect them. This, of course, means discipline which leads us to the logical aspect of our work environment.

Whereas the physical aspects of the work environment are tangible and easy to assimilate, the logical aspects are intangible and perhaps harder to manipulate for it involves dealing with human perceptions, attitudes and emotions. Along these lines, there are three considerations:

A. Corporate Culture

The corporate culture is expressed in terms of the accepted customs, morality, and society of the institution.

• Customs dictate the expected manner of conduct for the culture. It prescribes the etiquette to be observed in dress, speech, courtesy and politics (gamesmanship). Several companies, most notably IBM, have long understood the power of customs. These norms are established to project a particular image the company wishes to convey.

• Morality is the basis for our values. It influences our judgment in terms of what is ethical and what is not. Although uniform morality sounds attractive to executives, it can be quite dangerous if unethical practices are allowed to creep into the moral fiber of the company.

• Society defines our interpersonal relationships. This includes how we elect to govern and live our lives. Society defines the class structure in an organization, from Chairman of the Board to the hourly worker. It defines government, laws and institutions which must be observed by its members.

A corporate policy manual is useful for explaining the official rules and regulations of a business, but rarely will you find the corporate culture expressed in print. Why? Because it changes with time as people come and go from the organization. Typically, a new worker is taught the corporate culture by either the manager, by other

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workers with more tenure of service, or by personal observation. This brings up an important point: Culture is learned. To illustrate, I know a baseball manager who inherited a high school team with a long tradition of losing. To overcome this problem, the coach had to break habits, change attitudes, and impose new disciplines. By reshaping the culture of the team, the coach eventually turned them into winners for several years. Even after the coach retired, the team continued their winning ways because the coach had succeeded in embedding the culture into the psyche of the team. Concepts such as discipline, organization, workmanship, and accountability are all derived from the corporate culture.

This brings up another point: changing the corporate culture is no easy task. As creatures of habit, humans have a natural aversion to change of any kind. Yet, in order for a manager to succeed he has to be able to modify the corporate culture in his area to suit his needs. To do so, the manager can either dictate the changes, have his subordinates establish a new path, or a combination of both. Either way, it is necessary to establish examples and set precedents, thereby establishing models for others to assimilate. Understand this, if you do not teach the corporate culture properly, the workers will learn it on their own.

Devising standards of conduct is the first step in instilling discipline in your workers. This begins with standard and consistent terminology in order to avoid a "Tower of Babel" effect during production. Once a standard is established, enforce it. There is little point in enacting a change if nobody is going to enforce it. To this end, the manager must do more than inspect and enforce, he must lead by example. If the manager is caught violating the norms of the corporate culture, it will not go unnoticed by his subordinates who will in all likelihood assimilate the indiscretion.

Finally, be wary of creating a subculture at odds with the overall corporate culture. Senior management will allow some leeway in your department's behavior as long as it doesn't seriously conflict with corporate standards.

For more information on corporate culture, see:

No. 28 - *"Understanding Corporate Culture"* - June 13, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss050613.pdf

B. Management Style

In my last bulletin, I described the three theories of management, X, Y, Z, each having a different philosophical basis than the others. See:

No. 50 - *"How Do We Manage?"* - November 14, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss051114.pdf

It now becomes necessary to determine your own personal style of management, for example:

• Will you take a dictatorial approach and try to "micromanage" everything or will you allow group participation in the decision making process?

• Will you provide for additional training to cultivate the staff or will this be left to their own discretion?

• How much personal responsibility will you allow your workers to assume, a little, a lot, or nothing at all?

• How much discipline and organization do you require?

As mentioned in the *"How Do We Manage?"* article, managers will use different elements of Theories X, Y and Z to suit their needs. It is all ultimately based on the manager's perceptions of the workers in terms of their intelligence level, motivation, and attitudes towards work. This is why it is important the manager studies and understands his employees. If he is in tune with his workers, he will devise a suitable management style that both the manager and the workers can accept. Ultimately, the manager is seeking a uniform and consistent management style that is fair and won't show favoritism, thereby affecting morale.

Keep in mind, management is most definitely NOT a democracy, it is a dictatorship, be it autocratic or benevolent. How much freedom the workers are allowed is based on what the manager allows.

But the manager should never be afraid to push the staff to excel to a new level and affect his department's culture (as seen in the baseball manager example). Being a manager means that you are not in the popularity business. Do not be afraid to exercise your authority if the need arises. Your decisions will not always be popular with the staff. Regardless, you have a job to do.

Understand this, in many situations people prefer to be told what to do and will willingly go along with the manager's orders if they believe it to be for their own good. But beware of becoming overbearing and stifling the freedom and creativity of your workers. Get them to work for you as opposed to against you.

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In order to promote morale, the manager should not only be fair and effective in implementing change, he should be the primary cheerleader. If the manager loses his faith in his department's ability to perform, his workers will lose faith in his ability to lead them.

As for me, I tend to believe what President Ronald Reagan said, *"Surround yourself with the best people you can find, delegate authority, and don't interfere as long as the policy you've decided upon is being carried out."*

I am very much a believer in empowering people as opposed to trying to micromanage everyone. However, sometimes it is necessary to micromanage the activities of others in order to obtain the precise results you want when you want them, but realize this may result in having an adverse affect on your staff. Its like saying, *"Look, you're not smart enough to do this, so I will direct your activity."* As the old saying goes, *"If something is urgent, do it yourself. If you have time, delegate it. If you have forever, form a committee."* The manager should be smart enough to stay a couple of steps ahead of the staff and constantly review project plans so that micromanagement is not necessary.

To assist in empowering people, I believe a manager should manage bottom-up, as opposed to just top-down. Under this philosophy, the manager assigns project plans and authority to perform work (top-down) and the staff should participate in the project estimating process and work according to their assignments (bottom-up). This is why in "PRIDE" Project Management we do not make use of the concept of "man hours," but rather, "Direct Time" and "Indirect Time." Direct Time represents the time necessary to perform the necessary assignments and is managed by the individual worker. Indirect Time represents interferences or distractions from performing the work and is the responsibility of the manager to control. For example, meetings, training, reviewing periodicals, and breaks may fall under the category of Indirect Time. If a worker is behind schedule on an assignment, the manager may opt to minimize the distractions so the worker can tend to their work. The ratio of Direct Time to Indirect Time is referred to as "Effectiveness Rate."

Effectiveness Rate = (Direct Time + Indirect Time) / 100

In most office work, employees are typically 70% effective, meaning in an eight hour day they perform approximately five hours of direct work. Effectiveness Rate should not be construed as an efficiency rating. For example, a worker can have a high effectiveness rate yet be your worst worker; it just means he knows how to manage his time. Further, a worker could have a low effectiveness rate, yet be your most productive worker. The concept of effectiveness rate is useful for computing project schedules, but more importantly, it represents worker empowerment. Again, the worker is responsible for their Direct Time, and the manager is responsible for Indirect Time. For more information on this subject, see:

No. 09 - *"Managing from the Bottom-Up"* - Jan 31, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss050131.pdf

The manager's ultimate goal is to promote teamwork. Sure, you will have individuals who can perform miracles, but they must either become an intricate member of the team or get out. Remember, teamwork can accomplish far more than individual effort.

C. Continuous Improvement

The manager should be intimate with all aspects of production in his area. Further, he should be constantly looking for new and imaginative ways for improving it. Before doing so, the manager should understand this fundamental concept of productivity:

Productivity = Effectiveness X Efficiency

Too often people fallaciously equate productivity with efficiency. This is simply not true. Efficiency simply represents how fast we can perform a given task. For example, an industrial robot on an assembly line can perform a task such as welding very precisely and quickly. But if the weld is being performed at the wrong time or wrong place, then it is counterproductive, regardless of how efficiently it performs the task. Effectiveness, on the other hands, is concerned with the necessity of the task itself or as we like to say, *"Do the right things."* Under this scenario, the manager should consider effectiveness first, and efficiency second. Undoubtedly, the manager will meet salesmen who will offer products promising improvements in efficiency. But if they cannot meld into your operations effectively, it will be counterproductive. By being conscious of both effectiveness and efficiency, the manager can avoid the *"Rearranging the Deck Chairs on the Titanic"* phenomenon whereby people work on the wrong things at the wrong time.

The latest gizmo may be technologically enticing, but the manager should be looking for pragmatic cost-effective solutions to adapt to his environment. Consider this, even if you purchase the latest technological marvel, will your people be sophisticated enough to use it? Further,

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the new technology may require the development of a dependency on a new vendor. To me, the simple solutions are the best. Be practical and be wary of developing a "Keeping up with the Jones'" mentality. After all, the Jones' may be in more trouble than you are.

Whether the implementation of change is large or small, recognize that people will resist it until it becomes a natural part of the corporate culture. As creatures of habit, humans have a natural aversion to change, even if it is for their own good. But if the manager is convinced of the necessity of the change, he must persist in its implementation. Dealing with change is a difficult challenge for the manager and the subject of another article:

No. 24 - *"Why We Resist Change"* - May 16, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss050516.pdf

If there is anything constant in life, it is change. Both the manager and his workers should understand this; it is a natural part of our lives. Don't fight it, adapt to it. But understand this, change simply for the sake of change is ridiculous. There should always be a significant reason for the implementation of change.

Understanding that change is an inherent part of life, the manager should consider the need for ongoing training of his workers to enhance their skills. Again, a Skills Inventory can assist in monitoring the staff's abilities and devising suitable training programs to suit your department's needs. Also encourage your staff to participate in trade groups and subscribe to trade related publications to stay abreast of developments and sharpen their skills.

The bottom-line on Environment: As manager, you want to create a workplace people want to come to and think of as their home away from home; a place they are proud of, loyal to, and take pride in workmanship. As noted British economic historian Arnold Toynbee said, *"The supreme accomplishment is to blur the line between work and play."*

3. PRODUCE/DELIVER

Equal to Leadership and creating the proper Environment, is the manager's duty of being able to Produce the products or services he is charged to deliver. Even if you have the best plans and environment, if you fail to deliver your products or services, you have failed as a manager. To illustrate, one of President Lincoln's first commanders of the Army of the Potomac during the American Civil War was General George B. McClellan,

an extraordinary engineer and organizer, but a complete failure at execution. If you are convinced of a specific course of action, do not procrastinate, act. An opportunity rarely presents itself twice.

Producing includes delivering quality goods on-time, on-schedule, and within budget. Consequently, it is wise to establish a production control function within your area; someone charged with monitoring activities and expediting problems that might arise. This can take many forms depending on the size of your department and available resources, be it a sharp secretary, a perceptive foreman or supervisor, or a staff of people to oversee production. Here, tools like Project Management (PM) systems and work measurement tools provide great assistance in this regard. PM is used for reporting time, costs, and monitoring schedules. Work measurement tools analyze trends and performance, be it words typed per minute, number of keystrokes, compilations, machine cycles, or time performing a given task versus mistakes or errors made. Not only are such tools invaluable for troubleshooting production schedules but are also useful for spotting inefficiencies in need of improvement.

In terms of delivering a quality product/service, the manager should understand the relationship of quality to the time necessary to produce the goods.
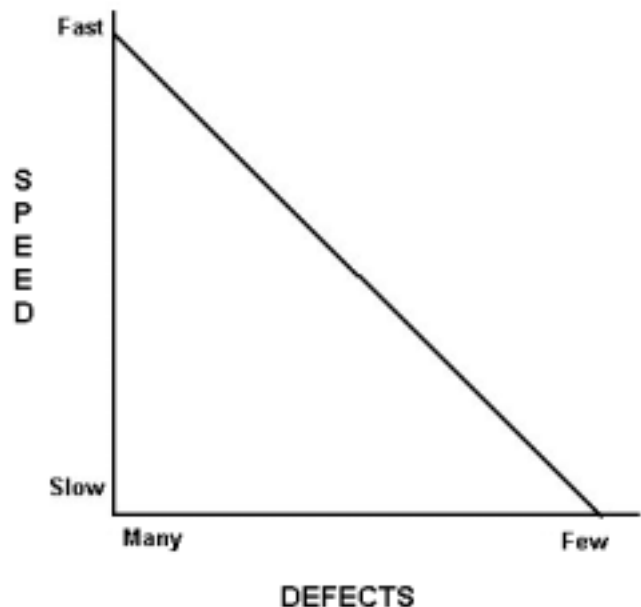
The faster the product is produced, the more likely it will contain defects in workmanship; conversely, the more time allowed in production, the greater the chances for producing a high-quality product. Although everyone stresses the need for quality, the reality is the manager

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must be able to balance development time against defects in workmanship and that a suitable development time needs to be devised to match the level of quality desired. This also means the level of precision in production is proportional to the level of quality desired, all of which will greatly influence a manager's style of management. For example, in a high pressure situation, the manager may exercise more supervision and a little friendly bullying in order to get the job done. Under less pressure, the manager will allow more worker freedom and participation in developing decisions.

Finally, the manager should keep an eye on the bottom-line and be smart enough to know when he has hit a wall and know when to ask for help. But please do not be driven by just numbers; consider risk as well as opportunity. For additional info, see:

No. 48 - *"The First Thing We Do, Let's Kill all the Bean Counters"* - Oct 31, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss051031.pdf

THE MANAGER'S PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

As indicated in the introduction, people often inherit the job of manager with little training or background. Since management primarily deals with people, a manager should possess good interpersonal relations/communications skills, including:

• Public speaking
• Persuasion & salesmanship
• Rhetorical thought
• Interviewing
• Negotiating
• Debate
• Listening
• Reasoning
• Patience
• Counseling
• Team building & coaching
• Writing skills (for such things as memos, proposals, and business letters)
• Basic math (for calculating cost/benefit analysis and return on investments)

You should never lose sight of the fact that you work for, with, and get things done through people.

Other than this, the manager should understand:

A. How to hire/fire people as well as how to do a

performance appraisal.

Corporate policy manuals will undoubtedly have standards to be observed in this regards. Nonetheless, be fair and objective. I always thought the best training for learning honesty and fairness is by spending time as an umpire or referee in sports. My years as a Little League umpire taught me a lot and allowed be to sleep well at night. Even if you despise a person, do not stoop to their level; be fair and impartial, the world will think better of you. Also, be smart enough admit when you have made a mistake and remedy the situation.

When evaluating a worker's job performance, be wary of the Peter Principle whereby a person has been elevated to their level of incompetence. Keeping people at such a level is a disservice not only to the company, but to the worker as well. When a person has risen above their level of competency, it will become obvious to others and may affect morale. Consequently, the manager's ability to be fair and equitable will begin to be questioned by the workers. Standard and routine performance appraisals should help overcome this problem. But if they are infrequently performed or done in an inconsistent manner, the Peter Principle will inevitably kick in. However, if you, as manager, believe the person is worth salvaging, work with the person and get him back on track.

For additional information on firing people, see:

No. 33 - *"Firing Employees isn't for Sissies"* - July 18, 2005
http://www.phmainstreet.com/mba/ss050718.pdf

B. How to deal with corporate politics.

As social animals living in a competitive society, politics is a fact of life, be it on a grand scale or a minor request for your consideration. Don't ignore it, address it. In Western culture, it is customary for people to dig and scratch their way to the top, be it by merit or by politics (predominantly the latter). In the Eastern culture, primarily Japan, a class of workers are put on the same career path for ten years, after which their performance is evaluated and rewarded accordingly. This system promotes merit over politics. Interestingly, whereas the Western system promotes individual achievement, the Eastern system promotes teamwork. The corporate culture has a lot to do with this. Regardless, office politics is a fact of life in all societies.

As a manager, it is wise to identify the various fiefdoms of the company, who the Kings are, how their subcultures operate, and the general pecking order. Learn to

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keep your distance, operate within your own realm and do not try to usurp the authority of another thereby creating an enemy. Stay focused on your own territory. When dealing with the other fiefdoms, a little diplomacy can go a long way. Understand this, what people should do logically is not necessarily what they will do emotionally. A person skilled in tact and proper etiquette will survive a lot longer in the corporate world than someone who does not. Your intention should be to develop allies as opposed to enemies who will stab you in the back at an opportune moment.

All corporate politics are based on human ego and the higher you go up in the organization, the bigger the egos will inevitably be. People will fight you over a variety of things, be it simple competition and domination, jealousy, sheer spite, or because they simply don't like how you look today or something you said. This is where being "politically correct" comes in handy. Understand corporate politics, but do not let it consume your time or distract you from your mission.

If corporate politics turn ugly or vicious, be prepared to either turn the other cheek or be prepared to fight back. Both are useful. Turning the other cheek may win the admiration of your staff by not stooping to the level of your opponent, but some may also see it as a sign of weakness in your character. Fighting an issue will tell them you are a principled man who is not afraid to stand up to adversity, but it also may say to them you are a hothead. If you need direction, seek the advice of your superiors or contemporaries and discuss the problem. Sometimes the best solution is to sit down with your opponent and offer your hand in peace. Even if this fails, your superiors and subordinates will know you at least extended the olive branch and will not blame you for any other action you might take.

Create a spirit of cooperation as opposed to competition. As noted quality expert W. Edwards Deming liked to say, *"Create Win-Win situations."* Instead of a Win-Lose situation, where one party wins at the expense of another party's loss, why not establish partnering programs whereby both parties win? I remember how Deming used to like to talk about "Nylon" which represented a successful joint venture between two parties, one in New York (NY) and one in London (LON). Remember, the only good business relationship is one where both parties prosper. To this end, forge alliances within your company and support an "Open Door" policy, not only to the workers of your department, but to the rest of the company as well. Keep the lines of communications open.

Finally, be on the lookout for gossip pertaining to your department and be prepared to do a little rumor control. Gossip and rumors can spread like wildfire in your department and can have an adverse affect on morale To nip it, you should have a standard and consistent line of communication with your subordinates as well as lateral relationships. For example, daily/weekly e-mails or memos discussing plans and developments in the department. If your people are well informed, they will be less likely to fall prey to gossip.

C. Is image everything?

To a lot of people in Western society, image is much more important than producing results. For example, I have a friend who serves as a Systems Manager in New England who had an important project requiring supplemental help in programming. Consequently, he began to recruit programmers by offering very competitive salaries and generous benefits packages. Interestingly, he had one applicant turn my friend down simply because the applicant wanted the title of "Software Engineer" as opposed to a mere "Programmer."

Image is nice but lacks credibility if you cannot produce. Our job titles, form of dress and physical appearance, speech, mannerisms, and political moxie all affect human perceptions. Yes, image is important but do not rely on it entirely. You must be able to back it up.

As manager, dress appropriately; dress for success. Create the proper image you want your staff to emulate. But don't put on false airs that can be easily seen through by your workers. Otherwise, your credibility will be shot.

Lead by example. Never ask someone to do something you aren't prepared to do yourself. And always remember to speak the right word at the right time. As Benjamin Franklin said, *"Remember not only to say the right thing in the right place, but far more difficult still, to leave unsaid the wrong thing at the tempting moment."*

LESSONS LEARNED

The following is a summary of the lessons inculcated herein:

Management = Responsibility

Know the business. Think in terms of "360 Degrees."

Run your department like a business.

(continued from page 9)

As manager you have three prime duties to perform: Provide Leadership, Establish the proper working Environment, and Produce/Deliver your products or services.

The manager's word should be considered his bond.

A true manager is a person of integrity.

Beware of your chief firefighters, they are probably your chief arsonists as well.

Control your destiny. Be proactive as opposed to reactive.

Our physical surroundings affect our attitudes towards our work.

Culture is learned.

Insist on standard terminology; thereby avoiding a "Tower of Babel" effect.

Once a standard is established, enforce it. There is little point in enacting a change if nobody is going to enforce it.

Changing the corporate culture is no easy task.

Be wary of creating a subculture at odds with the overall corporate culture.

The manager should be smart enough to stay a couple of steps ahead of the staff and constantly revising project plans so that micromanagement is not necessary.

Management is most definitely NOT a democracy, it is a dictatorship,be it autocratic or benevolent. How much freedom the workers are allowed is based on what the manager allows.

Being a manager means that you are not in the popularity business.

Manage from the bottom-up, not just top-down. Empower people and hold them accountable for their actions.

Effectiveness Rate = (Direct Time + Indirect Time) / 100

The worker is responsible for managing their Direct Time, and the manager is responsible for controlling Indirect Time.

Teamwork can accomplish far more than individual effort.

Productivity = Effectiveness X Efficiency

If there is anything constant in life, it is change.

Whether the implementation of change is large or small, recognize that people will resist it until it becomes a natural part of the corporate culture. As creatures of habit, humans have a natural aversion to change, even if it is for their own good.

The supreme accomplishment is to blur the line between work and play.

Even if you have the best plans and environment, if you fail to deliver your products or services, you have failed as a manager.

If you are convinced of a specific course of action, do not procrastinate, act. An opportunity rarely presents itself twice.

You should never lose sight of the fact that you work for, with, and get things done through people.

Keeping people at a level of incompetence is a disservice not only to the company, but to the worker as well.

If corporate politics turn ugly or viscous, be prepared to either turn the other cheek or be prepared to fight back.

The only good business relationship is where both parties prosper.

Keep the lines of communications open.

Create "Win-Win" situations.

Image is nice but lacks credibility if you cannot produce.

CONCLUSION

The lessons listed above are based on 30 years of practice and observations in hundreds of commercial and nonprofit enterprises around the world. They are commonsense approaches that are universally applicable and transcend company type.

There is more to management than saying, *"Lead, follow, or get the hell out of the way."* It is a people-oriented function requiring someone intimate with the business of

the enterprise and well versed in interpersonal communications/relations. Someone who knows how to get what he wants through people. Regardless of the management tools of the day, they do not make the decisions, the human-being does. I encourage people to use suitable management tools, but more importantly, I encourage them to develop their people skills first. Consequently, a manager is one part visionary, one part coach, and one part politician.

The ultimate measurement of a manager's abilities is whether the department can function successfully in his absence. By creating a well oiled machine, the manager's goal is to do himself out of a job and leave the department better off than when he first took charge.

The business schools do not teach these lessons. I'm just filling in the gaps. Hopefully these lessons will serve you well as manager. If not, you can always prepare three envelopes.

END

About the Author

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