A Critical Aspect of Management:
Understanding the Interface of Human Beings and Working Environment

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The business libraries around the world are replete with books, professional journals, and theses on management. The creative as well as the mediocre forays into the subject attempt in their own and sometimes plagiarized way to describe, dissect, analyze, prescribe, philosophize, socialize, behavioralize, psychologize and in some cases fantasize about all realms and facets of management. The grossest disservice to the study of practice of management has been done by the plethora of "How to Manage" workbooks, articles and books. These works unsuccessfully attempt to reduce an extremely complex subject into a simple formula for the masses. This is similar to reading parts of *The Physicians' Desk Reference* and then trying to practice medicine. This is obviously a fallacy and management is not the only discipline that has suffered from it. The masses are bombarded by books and magazine articles on every subject from self-analysis to septic tank cleaning.

Therefore, attempting to put the study and practice of management into its proper prospective it is desirable to review four general, but not all inclusive, topics which preview how the manager and the organizational environment do and not function.

The general topics are:

I. Conceptions and misconceptions about how managers and organizations function.
II. The dynamics of organizations and how managers really interface and produce results or lack of results.
III. Defining the development of management patterns that permit departments of organizations to interface and achieve efficient results.
IV. The individual human being is the most important factor in advancing productivity.

TOPIC I: CONCEPTIONS AND MISCONCEPTIONS ABOUT HOW MANAGERS AND ORGANIZATIONS FUNCTION.

In the classical definitions of what managers are supposed to do, that is, what the past great gurus of management prescribe, managers should find themselves doing the following.

Planning – What should be done in the Short and Long run
Organizing – Define who will do what and how it will be accomplished
Staffing – Find the right people for the jobs that must be done
Directing – Provide general and specific guidelines for daily business activities
Controlling – The use of methods which permit the determination of the status of goal achievement, as well as provide methods to adjust department and organizational response
Innovating – Put ideas into profitable action
Representing – Present the department or organization to the public or peer or superior groups

Managers usually do these activities in a vaguely general way, but an investigation by Mintzberg[1] presents an enlightening and much more realistic description of how managers function. Folklore versus fact contrasts theory with practice.

"FOLKLORE: The manager is a reflective, systematic planner."
"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."[2]

The evidence supports the facts, and the manager is responding to the job environment. However, many demand's made of managers are within his realm of control; for example, more work and responsibility can be delegated, more planning and coordinating to anticipate and prevent some short term events, and practicing time management principals, such as those prescribed by Alan Lakin. Time can be more fully utilized by setting priorities and closing the office door for short periods of time. Nevertheless, there are emergencies sometimes beyond a manager's control which demand even more time.

As previously stated, the manager is responding to stimuli created by the daily work environment. These daily stimuli are not generally conducive to long term planning or the practice of classical management as defined in text books.

"FORKLORE: The effective manager has no regular duties to perform."[3] In the classical sense this will be accomplished by effective PLANNING, ORGANIZING, COORDINATING AND CONTROLLING.

"FACT: In addition to handling exceptions, managerial work involves performing a number of regular negotiations, and processing of soft information that links the organization with its environment."[4]

In many small organizations the upper managers must fill in for absent staff simply because additional staff cannot be afforded. Managers in this situation must be careful to avoid prolonged periods of time doing staff work, or else many facets can go out of control which further aggravate small staffing situations.

Managers are important communication links within the organization as well as with customers. Unless staffs, organizational departments, and customers receive and comprehend messages there is no control whatsoever over the working environment.

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[1] Mintzberg, Henry, "The Manager's Job, Forklore and Fact," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1975, p.50

[2] Loc. Cit.

[3] Ibid.

[4] Loc. Cit.

"FOLKLORE: The senior management needs aggregated information which a formal management information system best provides."[5]

"FACT: Managers strongly favor the verbal media – namely, telephone calls and meetings."[6] Actually, functional managers use verbal and hard MIS data to inform themselves. The verbal media, especially gossip, may predict the future. Managers use all of this information, hard and soft, assess the accuracy, build a mental model and proceed to make decisions based on input and the resulting judgement. [7]

"FOLKLORE: Management is, or at least is quickly becoming, a science and a profession…A science involves the enaction of systematic, analytically determined procedures or programs…, a profession involves knowledge for some department of learning or science."[8]

"FACT:The manager's job is complicated, especially because of time constraints and lack of a thoroughly defined job. These and other complications created by the job environment continue the merry-go-round effect. Also, Management Science *per se* has not progressed well in adapting to the actual business world, thus reducing the effect of hard MIS data."[9]

"FORKLORE: A manager takes orders only from his superior (unitary command)."

"FACT: Managers respond to many order givers, not only within the organization, but with the parent organization and customers. For example: It is usually not wise to ignore the boss's secretary.

"FORKLORE: The manager spends a lot of time supervising his subordinates."[10]

"FACT: The need to interact with many groups outside his (as many as 30 or 40 sometimes) keeps the manager from his people."[11] The competency of subordinates, stages of various projects, the management and control style of the manager are several additional factors that must be considered when assessing the amount of time spent in supervising subordinates.

"FOLKLORE: The good manager looks only at results."[12]

"FACT: Because the dynamic organization has many independent parts, it would be disastrous, if not impossible, to wait until each section completed its part to coordinate." Therefore, continuous feedback is necessary.[13] The lack of planning and timing of the smallest details have caused the loss of millions of dollars to organizations around the world.

"FOLKLORE: To get results, a manager must have authority equal to the responsibility." This is the current business school theory. A number of years ago the famous Fayol stated that those in authority should have commensurate responsibility. This is just the reverse of the current theory!

"FACT: A manager almost never has total authority over projects and areas that are his responsibility." The manager must depend on the actions of many people, and other managers over which he has no control whatsoever.[14] The manager gets things done though people and he must wear many hats (salesman, cajoler, coordinator, auctioneer, etcetera) to elicit the many responses needed to achieve a goal.

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[5] Loc Cit.

[6] Ibid,p.52

[7] For additional information on this topic see: Keen, Peter G.: "How Managers' Minds Work," *Harvard Business Review*, May-June, 1974, p.79

[8] Ibid, p.53

[9] Grayson, C. Jackson; "Management Science and Business Practice," *Harvard Business Review*, July-August, 1973, p. 41, a practical and philosophical discussion of the management science dilemma.

[10] Sayles, Leonard E., *Managerial Behavior*, Chapter 3, McGraw-Hill,1964

[11] Loc. Cit.

[12] Loc. Cit.

[13] Loc. Cit.

[14] Loc. Cit.

"FOLKLORE: Staff people have no authority: They only recommend."[15]
"FACT: In reality, staff exercises very real power."[16] Their power is derived from several sources which cannot be overlooked; namely authority and responsibility delegated to them by management, management's confidence in them, their influence on management, and combinations of all of the above which confers on the staff a high place in the political machinery of the organization.
"SUMMARY: If the management novitiate does not quickly recognize the difference between theory (FOLKFORE) and real life (FACT), the job environment in an organization can be a harsh, desolate place which causes early destruction or frustration for those not able to adapt to reality."

    Now that prominent FACTS about management behavior have been properly elevated over FOLKLORE it is important to understand the dynamic, not static, environment of the organization in which the manager works.

TOPIC II: **THE DYNAMICS OF ORGANIZATIONS AND HOW MANAGERS REALLY INTERFACE AND PRODUCE RESULTS, OR LACK OF RESULTS.**

    Organizations exist in order to achieve objectives that are set for or by the organizations themselves. Examples of groups formed to achieve objectives can be found all the way back to the caveman days. Essentially, to achieve objectives necessity has always created chiefs and Indians; the generals, colonels, lieutenants, sergeants and, of course, the soldiers they command. Organizations capitalize on individual skills by dividing into departments which have specialized functions.

The traditional organization chart looks like the following:

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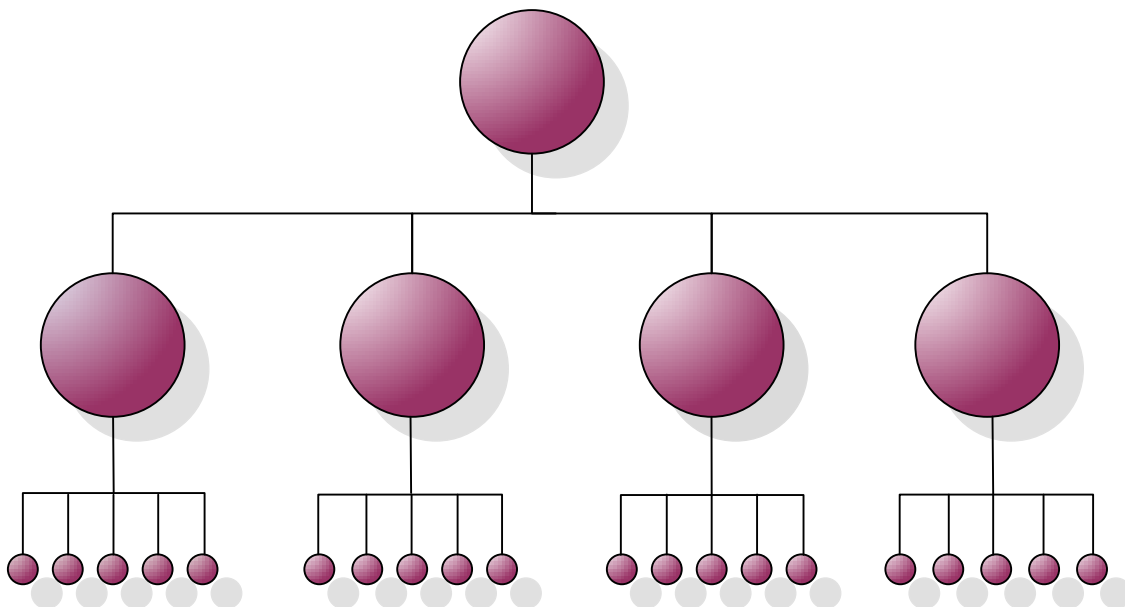
[15] Loc. Cit.

[16] Loc. Cit.

This type of charting does not truly reflect how that organization functions. Each of the blocks are made up of a manager and subordinates, and according to the chart there are only vertical communications through the department manager. This situation just does not exist. Even in the most structured system it will not be valid. If the organization is to function with any degree of efficiency, managers and subordinates will communicate not only vertically but horizontally and diagonally as well.[17] The following chart is more representative of the actual functioning structure.[18]
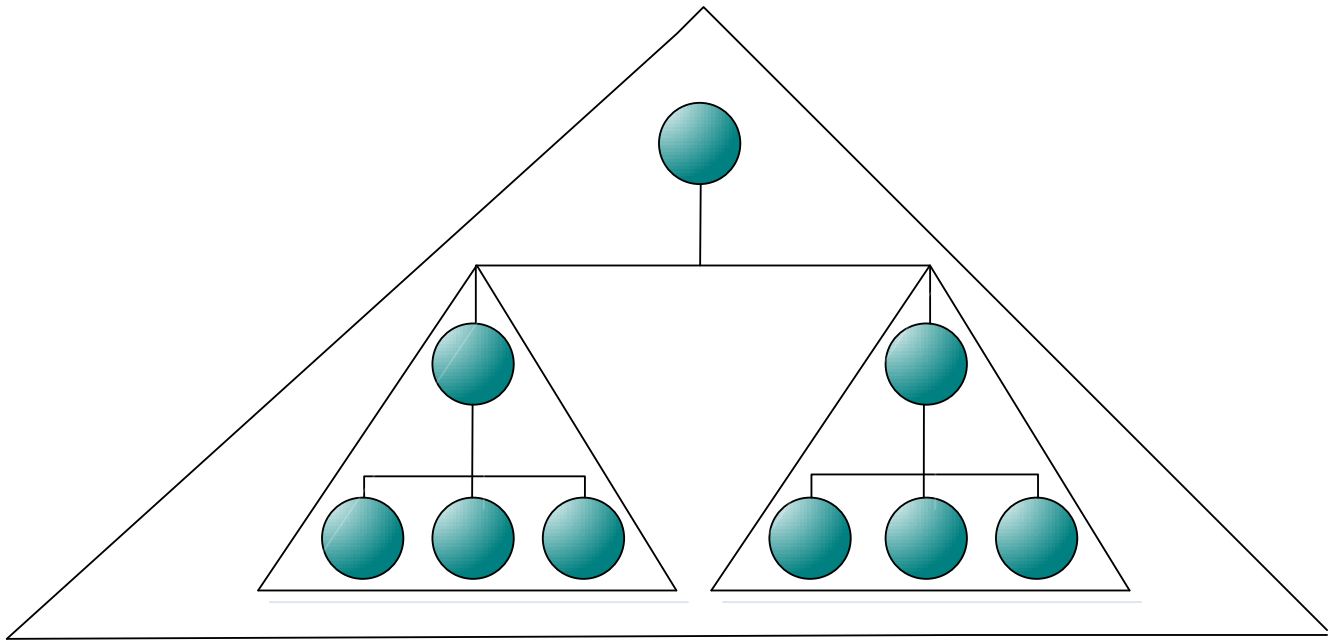
When examining a chart it must be realized that normally they do not define the real power sources, the informal and/or unrecognized leaders, informal communication systems, and political structure. Neither does it show that the organization is dynamic, not static. People, objectives, the business environment, etcetera are always changing. The product or service produced by the organization is continually moving through the organization and on to the user or customer. Or the opposite management theory says the organization moves around the output. Either way, management must grapple with the perpetual motion machine and make it reach the set of objectives (which are either stated, implied, or in all likelihood-*undefined and not communicated).*

Sayles[19] has done excellent work in generalizing and defining (theory development) how organizations function dynamically and in defining managerial behavior in this constantly changing environment. Just one segment of the "dynamics" of an organization is the work flow; and a simplistic example is:[20]

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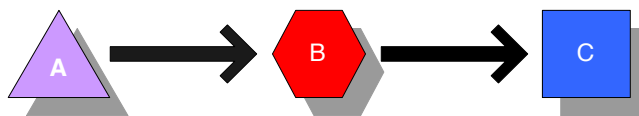
[17] For further discussion on this topic see: Dale, Ernest; *Management: Theory and Practice*, Chapters 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12, Third Edition, McGraw-Hill, 1973.

[18] Additional insights on organizational communication of this type can be learned from-Donnelly, John F.; an interview, "Participative Management at Work," *Harvard Business Review*, Jan-Feb, 1977, p.117

[19] Sayles, Leonard E.; *Managerial Behavior*, McGraw-Hill, 1964

[20] Ibid., p.68

"Manager B receives input from preceding workflow stages in the jurisdiction of manager A and transmits his output to succeeding stages of the work-flow in the jurisdiction of manager C. This work-flow is simplistic; but managers A, B and C must communicate and cooperate or problems arise in achieving the organizations objectives."

A more complex relationship is presented for consideration:[21]
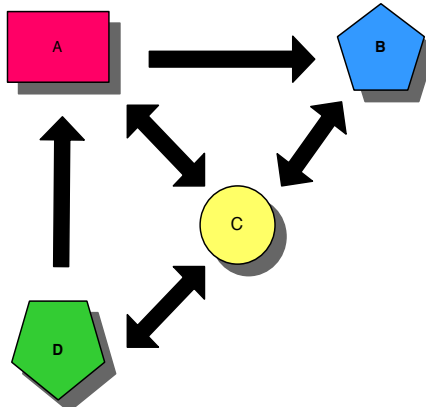
"Managers A, B,C and D must each have certain activities completed by manager D to fulfill their own work-flow requirement. Manager D must decide which work will receive priority. Since resources (human, budget, time, etcetera) are always limited, the managers must communicate and cooperate to prevent problems which would keep the organization from achieving goals."

In essence the manager gets things done through many people, not just subordinates, but also through peers and superiors. To be effective, the manager must know how to get things done through the organization's hierarchy of people, i.e., (individual human beings possessing various degrees of power and ambition).

The hierarchy makes three great impositions on everyone in an organization. The first is the "Peter Principle,"[22] i.e. "everyone rises to the level of their incompetence." Because of the Peter Principle, which is the result of poor management, people get promoted into jobs they are not capable of and then flounder there for the remainder of their career. Since they cannot do their jobs properly the organization suffers, and especially those people who must work regularly with the incompetent. Management can prevent the "Peter Principle" from establishing itself in the organization by exercising greater care when promoting. This is a simple answer to a complex problem which does require attention.

The second imposition is the myriad of control systems that will develop within any organization. Control systems are an essential management tool for gathering data and effecting change in an organization; but unless it is properly conceived, implemented, and complements management style it will do more harm than good. The organization and its people will react to the control system and beating the control system can become a game. This must be avoided.[23]

The third imposition is politics. Wherever two or more people gather there will be politics. A definition is elusive at best but everyone except the most naïve understands it as the struggle for power and control. It is a force to be dealt with by the manager who be necessity gets things done through the people in the political organization.

In summary, the management interface with its moving target, the dynamic organization, is a multifarious, complex connection which will break if not constantly strengthened and adjusted. Various characteristics of good management can be identified which provide the strongest adjustable interface.

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[21] Ibid., p.67

[22] Peter, Laurence J.; Hull, Raymond; *The Peter Principle*, New York, William Morrow and Company, Inc., 1969

[23] The definition, use and pitfalls of control systems is eloquently expressed by Cammann, Cortlandt; Nadler, David A.; "Fit Control Systems to Your Managerial Style," *Harvard Business Review*, Jan-Feb,1976

TOPIC III: DEFINING THE DEVELOPMENT OF MANAGEMENT PATTERNS THAT PERMIT DEPARTMENTS OF ORGANIZATIONS TO INTERFACE AND ACHIEVE EFFICIENT RESULTS.

There are many ways to categorize and describe management styles. The thesis and antithesis that comes to mind when the management of an organization is to be examined is democratic versus authoritarian. However, the style assumed by the organization is generally the personal style of the executive holding the greatest power. The characteristics and action patterns of individuals that have been judged as successful have traditionally been defined and, of course, scrutinized in the hope that the secrets of good management would be discovered. Whether the managers are top level or floor supervisors, they are all responsible for getting things done through people. What do they do to command results and why do they do it?

When examining managerial behavior it is extremely important to remember that in groups people are predictable; but individuals in and of themselves are essentially unpredictable. For example, the Scholastic Aptitude Test is very accurate in determining how many beginning college students will fail to earn a degree, but it cannot predict which individual students will fail. Remember this as you examine articles and lectures which identify individuals as composite amalgamations.[24]

McClelland and Burnham do an excellent job expounding the thesis that "Power is the Great Motivator"[25] and that managers who attain power exhibit identifiable personality profiles. McMurry goes on to tell us about "Power and the Ambitious Executive"[26] and how they use and stay in power by political tactics Machiavellian means. These authors discuss the "means" of executive powers, i.e. the identifiable personality traits. In another study Boettinger identifies personality traits for successful managers from the viewpoint: Is Management Really an Art?"[27] One can find in the literature many articles which identify the personality traits of the successful manager and each does so from a particular point of view. The result is a composite man in a composite environment, none of them fitting exactly any particular situation in a real life organization. As a point of reference the following is a list of some of the composite personality traits:

Team Spirit	Compatible	Self-Dramatization
Recognizes Responsibility	Reliable	People Skills
Ambition	Dependable	Vision
Power Oriented	Creates Alliances	Audacity
Controlled Authoritarian	Budget Power Personality	Imagination
Compassionate	Communicates	Aggressive
Fair	Controls Ego	Inspiring
Competent	Not Overly Defensive	Personable
Gamesman	Expedient	Sensitive
Loyal	Ruthless When Necessary	*Etcetera ad nausia*

What really is this Frankenstein which is a successful manager?

It does not matter whether the manager is the son of the Chairman of the Board, the high school graduate that came up through the ranks, or the college student; the fact is that they all become managers. All of them had to get the job done through people at all levels of the hierarchy. Success came from on the job training, and regardless of background, successful managers are those who

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[24] Social and behavioral scientists specializing in management styles and social/work relations of industrial organizations have been exceptionally prolific. For a study base in the subject see; Hertzberg, Frederick, "The Wise Old Turk," *Harvard Business Review*, Sept-Oct, 1974, p.70

[25] McClelland, David C. and Burnham, David H.; "Power is the Great Motivator," *Harvard Business Review* March-April, 1976 p.100

[26] McMurry, Robert N.; "Power and the Ambitious Executive," *Harvard Business Review*, Nov-Dec, 1973, p.140

[27] Boettinger, Henry M.; "Is Management Really an Art?," *Harvard Business Review*, Jan-Feb, 1975, p.54

identify the political structure and hierarchy of the organization and negotiate to acquire the support needed to produce results expected of them. The motives, techniques, management styles used, etcetera, become a moot point of academy because they would not be successful in that organization if acceptable personality traits for that organization were not exhibited.

We still perpetually attempt to practice Management Mythology, while in actuality results are produced by people as a result of negotiations which cut through the hierarchy. Manager B persuaded manager A to do thus and so. Supervisor C talked big boss A into doing thus and so because…Manager D got subordinate X to …because… Managers become salesmen and they negotiate to produce results.

TOPIC IV: THE INDIVIDUAL HUMAN BEING IS THE MOST IMPORTANT FACTOR IN ADVANCING PRODUCTIVITY.

Where do managers learn to negotiate so that they can get things done through people? It is certainly not taught in business school or American Management Association short courses! The process of learning to negotiate and manage can be partially explained by adapting the Transactional Analysis[28] framework for handling complex situations.

The *Parent* can be equated to management mythology, preconceptions, and heretofore unchallenged assumptions about the business and how to be a manager. The *Child* is the emotional gut feeling on a given subject. And the *Adult* represents the intellect which seeks out information, evaluates it, modifies the *Parent* and *Child* responses when necessary, and should make the decisions.

The successful manager will have attained a vast store of knowledge and instinct about human beings and how their feelings become the heart of an organization. It is essential that managers understand, communicate and react to human beings if an organization is to be efficient and above all, profitable.

Organizations are dynamic, not static. They depend on the ability of human beings to constantly and consistently deal with change.

Only change is certain in the fluid environment of business. For the human being and the organization to interface the human being must understand their job. They must know what they are to do, how to do it, whether their job performance was acceptable, and how their job contributes to achieving the goals of the organization as well as their personal goals.

Communicating with the individual human being is not always easy. The concept of instruction, stating what is expected and evaluating the performance of an individual is a clean and concise management practice; however, each individual understands words, interprets body language, rumors, and other cues in their own personal manner which are not always consistent with ours. The manager must try to understand each person and structure the communication process to achieve maximum impact with that person. The awareness level of managers regarding the human aspects of communication and management can be increased by carefully answering the following questions. Then ask yourself, are you responding to subordinates, peers and superiors properly?

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[28] Harris, Thomas A.; *I'm OK-You're OK*, New York, NY, Avon Books, 1967, 1968, 1969

MANAGER'S FOOD FOR THOUGHT LIST

➢ Can you identify the short and long term goals for your department and organization?

➢ Have you made plans to meet the goals?

➢ Have you examined the hierarchy and political structure of the organization?

➢ Are you getting things done through people?

➢ How do different people react to criticism, constructive or otherwise?

➢ Will the human beings' reaction to criticism be dependent on the manner it is presented?

➢ On the job, what will cause fear in the human being?

➢ If a person is afraid of something will it affect their response?

➢ What type of actions and words will make people mad?

➢ How do people react to those who say one thing and do something else?

➢ What can cause a person to feel they are not receiving support from others?

➢ Why do misunderstandings occur?

➢ How can misunderstandings be prevented?

➢ What makes a person refuse to do something?

➢ Why do people have a need to be part of the group?

➢ What cause cliques?

➢ Why do people spread malicious gossip?

➢ Do some words have different meanings to some people, and if so, why, and how can this be reduced or avoided?

➢ Will the personal goals of an individual affect their response in some work-related situations?

➢ Why do people keep "black books" and "just-in-case-the-boss-asks" files, and is this good or bad?

➢ What prevents people from communicating adequately?

➢ Why are some managers uncooperative, and how can this be resolved?

➢ Can the management philosophy of an organization be changed from the bottom up?

➢ Does a universal motivator exist?

➢ Should management strive to manipulate (in the truest sense of the word) people?

AUTHOR'S NOTE: Research since this article was written in 1977 confirms and expands on the basis presented. The indexes in future catalogs will offer the "FACT & FOLKLORE" of the 1980's.

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PERSONAL PRODUCTIVITY

- Being efficient is doing the thing right. Being effective is doing the right thing.
- First know your mission. Second, list your goals, prioritize them and eliminate all but the vital few. Third, use the list-and delete method for activities that will achieve your goals. Fourth, figure an action plan to complete the #A-1 activity. Finally, do it now.
- Learn to say "no" to requests that conflict with your goals, are not the best use of your ability, or could be better handled by others.
- "Hard Work = Success" is not a complete formula, The proven formula is "Hard Work + Results (those visible and deemed important) = Success."
- Start your day the night before by listing things to do. Especially useful on Friday night before a weekend. Give ideas time to incubate.
- Never plan for more than 50% of your day so inevitable interruptions will not ruin your timetable.
- Break difficult jobs into parts.
- Do unpleasant priority jobs first.
- Stick to what you are doing. Carry through to closure.
- Set deadlines for yourself and others. Use stress creatively
- Be a clock-watcher. Figure the per-minute and per-hour costs of your time.
- Work alone creatively in the mornings. Use afternoons for meetings.
- Have a do-not–disturb period every day.
- Eat a light lunch so you do not get sleepy in the afternoon.
- Keep your desk cleared for action. Put the most important work in the center of your desk.
- Rearrange your office layout so you do not face the door and other distractions.
- Discourage drop-ins and the "Got a minute?" syndrome.
- Increase your knowledge. Try to learn at least one new thing a day.
- Give yourself time off and special rewards when you have completed important tasks.

Meeting Maneuvers	Time Traps
✓ Plan to solve a problem, not hold a meeting ✓ Issue assignments in advance ✓ Manage the meeting whether you call it or others do ✓ Stick to the point ✓ Try to shoe-horn the job into a restricted time ✓ Don't leave without a specific action plan, even it is to do nothing ✓ Start and end on time ✓ If possible, don't attend	❖ Lack of priorities ❖ Inability to say "NO!" ❖ Over commitment ❖ Too much nitpicking ❖ Indecision ❖ Procrastination ❖ Firefighting ❖ Lack of motivation ❖ Socializing ❖ Self-interruptions

Life and Management by Aphorisms

THE RIGHT STUFF

The following is a checklist which may help give the job of selecting the right people the time and thought it deserves.

1. Define the qualifications needed in the job.
2. Interview candidates more than once.
3. Get more than one opinion-have associates interview them too.
4. Make a list of strong points and weaknesses.
5. Try to imagine people actually functioning in their jobs – what they would be good at – where they might fall down.
6. Check past records. Have they made steady progress? Have they made real contributions, or are they just job-hoppers?
7. What checks are there on mental capacity? Are they up to the job?
8. What are their outside interests – are these a key to personality?
9. Check references and acquaintances carefully.
10. Pick the right person the first time.The headaches you save will be your own.

"No problem can stand the assault of sustained thinking."

Voltaire

"Nothing in the world can take the place of persistence.
Talent will not; nothing is more common than unsuccessful men with talent. Genius will not; unregarded genius is almost a proverb.
Education will not; the world is full of educated derelicts.
Persistence and determination alone are omnipotent."

Calvin Coolidge

He that wrestles with us, strengthens our nerves, and sharpens our skill. Our antagonist is our helper.

Edmund Burke

"The credit belongs to the man who is actually in the arena, whose face is marred by dust and sweat and blood: who strives valiantly: who errs and comes short again and again, who knows the great enthusiasms, the great devotions, and spends himself in a worthy cause: who at the best, knows the triumph of high achievement: and who, at the worst, if he fails, at least fails while daring greatly, so

Do difficulties depress you or brace you up? If you stop to think of it, wouldn't life become monotonous, colorless, deadening were to cease to have to battle against obstacles? Difficulties should act as a tonic. They should spur us to greater exertion. I honestly think that difficulties, like work, are blessings in disguise, and that if we would study this subject through to the bottom, we would arrive at this conclusion.

B.C. Forbes

"Luck is what happens when preparation meets opportunity."

Elmer Letterman

Do we not sometimes regard our conscience as an awkward, troublesome possession? Do we not sometimes wish there had been implanted in us no such thing as our conscience? In business do we not at times look upon complaints as a nuisance? But in our calm, philosophic moments we realize that complaints, like conscience, often are salutary. If nobody ever voiced a complaint but simply suffered in silence and then quit us, our last state would be worse than our first.