

THE ROUTE FROM LITTLE MAN TO MIDDLE MAN

*a management trainer is faced
with using his own teaching*

A "moment of truth" comes after you have spent years in staff positions—advising and informing. Now, the man across the table asks for a decision regarding commitment of company resources that can affect the profit or loss for the year. You look around at the spectators—your "staff" of experts who have supplied all available information. One of these is your boss; he says by his silence, "It's your responsibility." Suddenly, it gets mighty lonely!

My arena was only a small one. But, *El Toro* was big. Should I face the issue or run for the barricades?

The situation had especial interest for me because, after several years of a staff assignment in manager development, I found myself being developed. As a manager on a project performed within a consortium, I planned, organized, staffed, directed, and controlled work on a fixed-price contract; I did numerous other things such as report, market, and maintain goodwill of customers. The event mentioned above occurred in my first conference to discuss the company's response to a *Request for Proposal* circulated by a government agency. As the "primary investigator," I had responsibility for decisions on how to respond within the guidelines of company policy.

That work setting provided an opportunity to evaluate some of my principles for developing managers and to see if I could apply the management techniques I had taught in courses and consultations. Admittedly, the comments here reflect the kinds of problems and learning experiences I encountered. However, the line management episode provides a perspective for the examination of beliefs.

MANAGEMENT DEVELOPMENT PRINCIPLES

The introductory sentence to each of the following paragraphs is a statement about management development that I made before the experience mentioned above. The subsequent comments describe my reaction to the principle.

1. Management development is self development. A man's response to the situation in which he finds himself, his attempts to evaluate his ideas, the opportunities he creates, and the efforts he makes to apply some of his concepts of managing are his own. As with any other job he can "flake off" or grow as he desires.

2. The most effective teacher is the immediate superior. The superior can be an extremely good teacher. He can arrange opportunities and determine, to a large extent, the direction in which his subordinate grows. The effect of the superior's teaching — whether deliberate or accidental — depends upon the kind of manager the boss is and how well he understands the job. He can cause his man to become dependent or help him become self reliant. He can help the subordinate to learn to manage or he can let him flounder. I noted that my growth spurts occurred just after my boss asked, "Do you have time for a cup of coffee?" Those were the occasions for a review of our operation.

3. The manager should be given responsibility and made accountable. Application of this principle really creates a learning situation. Having responsibility for a job becomes an opportunity to grow. Being accountable means that one either faces the bull or passes the buck. Here, again, the superior plays an important role.

4. Every manager should participate in a management program (course). I never had the opportunity, nor the time, for participating in a formal program in which I could think about managing. But, then, I had several things going for me. I have directed a hundred or more seminars or workshops for other managers; I had a boss who realized that his success depended upon mine and who applied principles two and three above. I still believe that every manager should have the opportunity to discuss this question: "What does it mean to be a manager in this company?" He should have this opportunity at several points in his career.

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5. The manager should be taught the tools of managing. This seems obvious; but which skills are best learned on the job? In terms of efficiency, some skills are best learned through OJT while some formal instruction is essential in others.

6. The manager development staff man is most influential when he develops consulting relationships with managers. It is difficult for me to evaluate this—I never received help from the management development staff. While I knew management principles, effective application followed from discussions with subordinates (frequently initiated by them) of our operations and staff relationships. Changes in team operation more often followed job-oriented discussions than academic discussions, even with the same person. The management development staffer could promote these discussions.

7. More improvement comes through team training and organizational development than from courses. The comments in six, above, support this conclusion in the absence of compelling evidence. Experience in team training of other men's teams also supports the conclusion.

MANAGEMENT COURSE CONTENT

If one assumes the necessity for some formal instruction in management he must answer questions about what to include. The following were included in basic supervision workshops which I conducted. The introductory sentence in each paragraph describes a topic for the course; it is followed by some reflections upon its importance. It should be remembered that a primary objective of my workshops was to help the manager think about what it means to be a manager.

1. Who manages? Shortly after reading Fuller's book, *Managing Your Job*, I began asking participants if they act or react. This is an important concept. In my management assignment I put this question to myself several times when becoming aware of being manipulated

or feeling that a task, e.g., predicting and scheduling manload, was not possible. Interestingly enough, I discovered that instead of being pushed around by experienced managers in the consortium, I gained control of the situation.

2. Planning. An exercise in planning seems related to the appreciation of the need to plan (plan, interviews, presentations, or telephone calls). Perhaps the mere act of planning helps as long as it does not delay action beyond the time at which one should act. The exercises in class did not help much in doing the actual planning because many of the formal tools were not taught. In addition to emphasizing the importance of planning, I would include considerable information and exercise in use of various tools of planning and the concomitant function of control.

3. Delegation. Lecture-discussions on the subject were directed to the importance of delegating to permit the manager to attend to matters other than technical detail and to give the subordinate a chance to stretch. These lectures made me aware of a tendency to remain involved after making an assignment. This put me on guard against the tendency and able to control it, but did not make me any more comfortable about remaining in the background.

4. Management style. Readings and discussions of management style have had little apparent effect—I deal with subordinates in basically the same manner as twenty years ago. Despite the lack of personality change, I now think about management style and understand myself better and, hopefully, am more effective because I am aware of how I perform managerial activities. I behave in a more rational (or rationalized) manner. I would continue to include this topic for a young manager because it is important to understand oneself and the environment; other approaches would also serve this function of self-analysis.

5. Communication. We all need frequent reminders of the need to be clear

and to understand each other. Demonstrations and lessons should be presented often. One concept I emphasized was that of active listening but now question the degree of emphasis. I found that listening and understanding increased the difficulty of making a decision because of the apparent plausibility of alternatives when seen from another point of view. I have noticed that many effective higher-echelon managers approach a situation with the same attitude as my wife has about many meals, "I've already decided what I'll serve but let's see if you have a better idea." I would include the subject of communication but am not clear as to the objectives.

6. Theories of management. The theme of my courses was that a manager should consider and evaluate approaches to management and formulate his own basis for action. We reviewed ideas of Lucius Clay, Machiavelli, McDougal, Blake, and others. I honestly cannot say what effect this kind of activity had upon my behavior. Something in my five years of manager development work made me conscious of the difference among various views. I became more committed to one point of view but now see it as a guide; I have become less idealistic, or less naive. I would include this topic—management theories—because of a belief that managers, more than many other professionals, should be committed to a philosophy in order to demonstrate relatively consistent behavior enabling peers and subordinates to know the ground rules for their own behavior.

7. Company financial management. I can point to only a single instance in which specific company-oriented courses led directly to cost reduction by me; but it saved more than my salary for the year. Understanding of burden rates and company accounting procedures helped me to become cost conscious, to evaluate financial effects of alternative actions, and to realize the importance of accurate financial reporting. Knowledge of financial practices greatly facilitated the task of preparing

proposals. I would now make certain that every young manager is well grounded in the cost accounting and budget procedures of his company.

8. **Company personnel policy.** Information about specific legal requirements has proved helpful in making some decisions. Knowledge of company goals and policies has guided me in choosing among alternatives. Several managers have told me that, as a result of a course in company personnel policy, they became better employees themselves. I would include personnel policy as an essential for young managers, although the specific practices can be learned on the job. The purpose would be to help the manager develop a framework within which to operate.

9. **PERT fundamentals.** The cost of time to acquire the fundamentals of this approach has been repaid many times. Its justification is to be found in the argument for necessary knowledge of planning tools.

AN IDEAL "PROGRAM"

Management development in a company is not accomplished by having a program. Development occurs in an environment which may contain several programs such as an appraisal program or an out-of-plant course. The facilitating environment is characterized by an attitude and by practices of managers which promote development of themselves and their subordinates. In this context, then, let us look at essential characteristics of an ideal environment, or an optimally facilitative environment.

1. The superior has responsibility for the development of his subordinates! He should determine *on-the-job* training needs, and control attendance at special or general courses. Most effectively, he would help the subordinate set performance goals, give him responsibility and make him accountable, and jointly appraise progress. I found that considerable development occurred when the boss asked, "And what are *you* going to do about it?"

2. The manager has the opportunity to reflect on his role as manager. This should occur early in his career and again at changes in the managerial role, e.g., promotion to second-level manager, entrance to top management. This opportunity might come in a seminar with peers, or in frequent talks with his boss or the personnel development staff. He should be helped to review the precepts and practices of effective managers and to question his own style of managing.

3. His superior and the manager development staff takes the initiative to establish and maintain a consulting relationship with him. The manager needs someone with whom to discuss problems. Other managers can help. Sometimes a consultant who is not involved can be of more help. Managers often do not seek assistance, or may not even know of its availability; therefore, others must take initiative.

4. The supervisor receives guidance in handling routine. At the time of his appointment he would receive a handbook, much like some secretarial handbooks, which tell him how to handle routine matters such as completing time cards and making requisitions. It need not go into details of processing the work, a matter better left to the more efficient secretary. Rather than formal courses, a programmed instruction format may prove to be an excellent way for the supervisor to become familiar with these matters.

5. The manager has a thorough grounding in personnel policy. He understands company policy and enough of the procedures and relevant laws to keep himself and the company out of trouble and to do a positive job of selling the company to the employees. He knows and feels that the personnel or industrial relations department exists to help him and can be called upon at any time.

6. The manager has the opportunity for training in use of various management tools. These tools include engineering management procedures, PERT, and budgeting. When he will perform a

marketing function, he learns to prepare proposals. This instruction consists of more than lectures. His superior continues the instruction by coaching him through the job. A possible, but less desirable, alternative would be to have experience in a simulated task. Every such experience, whether on a working team or in a management game, is reviewed with the intention of maximizing the learning. A three-to-six-month assignment to a manager-development staff can be extremely useful.

7. The manager has responsibility and is accountable. Reality provided by accountability makes practice more effective. Since the manager holds the job for an indefinite period, he faces consequences and cannot plan an "end game" hoping the problem will go away. The boss also gives the man a frequent pat on the back and helps him to identify those things he did that resulted in good management.

8. The manager studies and reads widely in management and other professional fields. A manager should know the environment within which he works so that he can assess its impact upon his own activities. His environment includes company operations, the business world, and the social and technical world. He should be able to adopt or adapt new developments to his own operation when they are relevant.

9. Periodic performance review sessions are held. In addition to the critiques of performance which should occur with the completion of specific tasks, sessions between the boss and his subordinate help both to take stock of their operation. These face-to-face discussions occur at least annually for the purpose of answering this question, "How are we doing and how can we help each other to reach our individual and collective goals?"

10. The manager is helped to become a business man. Opportunities for education in business include how the customers and the company operate in regard to contracts and pricing, administration of sub-contracts, computation of

burden, etc. The theoretical aspects of these matters could be treated in a college course while the applications to the specific company and industry are dealt with on the job or in an in-house course. A management game, played with a computer, can provide a model and help the manager to understand his world — provided the game is properly used.

11. The manager is helped to understand himself and others. The company provides means to help the manager gain insight into human behavior. In some cases, behavioral laboratories or sensitivity training would be appropriate.

12. The climate within the company facilities performance. A man's superior determines the presence of these eight characteristics.

A. A clearly-perceived environment

in which the subordinate understands the task, the organization and the people around him.

B. Defined objectives so that the manager can formulate some goals for self-development and for performance in his unit. (One objective is that of helping subordinates develop.)

C. Freedom to act and to test new ideas, with accountability for results.

D. Return of information about performance so that he can assess the results of his actions.

E. A second chance — opportunity to talk over a problem with his boss and to prepare for the next time.

F. Reward or recognition which reinforces desirable behavior.

G. Opportunities for education in general management or specific tools.

H. A work environment which supports change and in which most of the managers, if not all, seek ways to improve the efficiency of their management system.

CONCLUSION

After making the transition from scientist to staff man to manager and then to staff management, I believe that development is a process including the company management, the education staff, the immediate supervisor, and the individual. Improvement in performance comes from changing both the individual and his environment. As I read my own writing here, one question becomes obvious: "As the man in the middle, what have I done to honor my responsibility and privilege of helping my subordinates to grow?"

USOE AID FOR TRAINING SUBPROFESSIONALS

An effort to develop educational programs that will help young people and adults qualify for highly skilled jobs in new technical fields has been announced by the U.S. Office of Education.

The Office's Bureau of Research said it was supporting four projects to produce postsecondary and junior college courses to train subprofessional aides for careers in bio-medical, nuclear medical, electro-mechanical, and electro-optical technologies.

Dr. Norman J. Boyan, Acting Associate Commissioner for Research, said these rapidly expanding fields "urgently need technicians to support physicians, engineers, and scientists in operating, maintaining, and developing the complex devices being used in medicine, communications, and the missile, computer, and aerospace industries."

Examples of these devices are artificial organs, heart-lung machines, optical welding instruments, laser communica-

tions equipment, missile control systems, and radioisotope equipment used in nuclear medicine. It is estimated that trained technicians can relieve physicians of up to 90 percent of the time required for typical nuclear medical procedures.

"Presently, there is a wide gap between available jobs and the great numbers of young people and adults, including many of the disadvantaged, who are unprepared to cross this gap, though many of the waiting jobs are within their levels of aspiration and ability and offer excellent means for economic and social advancement," Dr. Boyan said.

The Technical Education Research Center, Inc., Cambridge, Mass., is administering the projects with funds provided under a section of the Vocational Education Act of 1963 which authorizes research, training, and experimental programs to meet special needs in vocational and technical education.