

# PRINCIPLES OF BEHAVIOR FOR SOUND MANAGEMENT

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The sequence of field trials leading to organization development (OD) that began in Baton Rouge during the 50s produced two significant results. One is the identification and crystallization of principles of behavior that are fundamental for sound management. The other is concerned with the development of a technology suitable for bringing these principles of behavior into daily use through planned change.

Behavioral-science theory and research across 22 human disciplines has been sufficient to allow the identification of a number of principles which, when brought into use, result in more productive and creative behavior.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there is very important evidence demonstrating that when these principles of behavior guide, conduct and define its direction and character, physical and mental health consequences of a positive character are also created.<sup>2</sup>

A general statement can be made which gives character to

these principles: *When these principles are in use, human interactions are characterized by mutual trust and respect.* This, in other words, is the end result of sound behavior, which is also productive and creative in the operational sense. Grid Organization Development is intended to strengthen the user of these principles as the basis of sound management.<sup>3</sup>

The principles include the following:

**1. Fulfillment through contribution is the key motivation that gives character to human interaction and supports productivity.**

We know there are four alternative motivations that can be compared with "fulfillment through contribution." They include: (1) to control, master and dominate, and at the same time, avoid the risk of failure; (2) to gain and maintain the warmth and approval of others and avoid their rejection; (3) to do whatever is necessary to hang on and avoid expulsion; (4) to be popular, with the majority and avoid being left out. Contrasted with these four motivational systems, fulfillment through contribu-

tion means to be useful, to make a difference, to be productively helpful to others. It is the opposite of being selfish. The need to gain satisfaction from contributing seems very widespread, though for many it is an underdeveloped motivation.

**2. Being responsible for one's own actions is the highest level of maturity and only possible through widespread delegation of power and authority.**

Free choice is a basic value, and the ability to make a maximum contribution is premised upon the widespread capacity for exercising free choice, brought about by widespread delegation of power and authority. The fullest exercise of responsibility is possible only when authority for self-responsible action flows downward in the organization. Then, opportunities for being more productive and creative can be acted on by those who see them.

**3. Open communication is essential for the exercise of self-responsibility.**

When communication is free and open, organization members have

access to all information that is available and pertinent to their interests and responsibilities. Organizations contain all kinds of strictures on communication, including those of an official sort, marked "confidential," and human, *i.e.*, the tendency to withhold information for fear that it will be misunderstood by others, or misused or used to their advantage.

Eliminating these barriers is one of the essential conditions for productive and creative behavior. Organization members can only contribute when the information requisite to a sound contribution is available. The same for informed free choice: it can only be exercised when information that provides the basis for free choice is available, and so on.

#### **4. Shared participation in problem-solving and decision-making stimulates active involvement in productivity and creative thinking.**

A truism of organization life is that no one person can do it all him or herself. Cooperation is necessary; collaboration is essential; interdependence is a "given;" boss/subordinate and team relations are inevitable.

The key words here are collaboration and cooperation. When interactions are of a cooperative character, it becomes possible to view problems from different perspectives, to pool information, and to test with others possible courses of actions in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of each. Shared participation, in other words, is a principle of behavior, which is violated whenever words such as force, coercion, pressure or threat are used to characterize the situation. Under these conditions there may be participation, but the "shared" concept is missing. When shared participation is characteristic of teamwork, then more than one person "owns" the problem, feels involved in it, and is responsible for contributing to its solution.

#### **5. Conflicts are solved by direct problem-solving confrontation with understanding and agreement the basis of cooperative effort.**

It is inevitable that when people get together on a teamwork basis

which is characterized by open communication, and so on, differences will arise as to how to solve problems or which course of action to take. Eventually choices are narrowed down and one must be selected from several. The result is that conflict can become intense, to the extent that mutual trust and respect can be severely eroded, communication distorted, and feelings of personal responsibility substantially reduced, unless it is resolved in a sound way.

Confrontation really means taking a problem-solving approach to those differences and, through open communication, identifying the underlying facts, logic or emotions that account for these differences. Resolution is gained through understanding and insight rather than participants feeling compelled to yield, withdraw, compromise or to retain one's position or resign one's membership.

When resolving conflicts through confrontation is a widely shared value within an organization, it becomes more possible for people to feel a responsibility for solving them, and to make the effort to do

so. Furthermore, mistrust or disrespect resulting from playing politics, which, when present, demand the expenditure of vast amounts of human energy, are substantially reduced, leaving human resources more available for application to the organization's productive and creative efforts.

#### **6. Management is by objectives.**

Management by objectives is the operational way of gaining benefits from maturity and commitment that are possible when individuals are goal directed. Organizations learn to manage themselves in such ways as to identify the objectives that should be pursued, and then to set in motion the kinds of activities and effort essential for achieving them.

There are many aspects of what is sometimes described as management by objectives which violate sound principles of goal directed behavior. An edict is not a goal; a quota is not a goal; a forecast is not a goal; a promise is not a goal. None of these words define a goal in the sense used here. When personal commitment is attached to the goal, one is drawn to it,

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seeks to achieve it, thinks about how to reach it and makes the effort necessary to attain it. When management by objectives through goal setting is done in the proper manner, the personal goals of individuals and the goals of the organization tend to become integrated and more harmonious.

#### 7. Merit is the basis of reward.

There are two criteria for evaluating an individual's meritorious contribution to the organization. One is that the contribution furthers the organization's prospects of success; the second is that the contribution has no adverse side effects. This is the meaning of reward based on merit.

When reward is based on something other than merit, a different language is necessary to describe it. The "old boy's network" says that ties from the past have an influence on reward that is not justified by performance. Organization politics point in the same direction. The "bull in the china closet" pictures a person who has great strength of will but leaves destruc-

tion in his/her wake; the "bull in the china closet" meets criterion No. 1 but violates criterion No. 2.

When reward is based on merit, organization members experience the system of promotion and pay as being just, fair and equitable; when reward is not based on merit, it is said to be unfair and arbitrary.

The importance, of course, is that only when reward acknowledges the merit of contribution is the effort to contribute to the organization reinforced.

#### 8. Learning from work experience through critique.

Critique is a process of stepping away from experience and studying it in order to learn what, in fact, is going on, to see alternative possibilities for improving performance, and for anticipating and avoiding activities that will have adverse consequences.

We know that critique is a more or less "natural" way of reflecting on what has happened. In many organizations, studying what has already passed is regarded as wasteful, or the crisis character of the operation leaves no time for an assessment of what occurred. When postmortem critiques are made, they tend to be in the nature of "Monday morning quarterbacking," not of one's own participation in the problem, but what others did that proved disastrous.

When organization members have widespread understanding of, and skill in utilizing critique, it becomes possible to accelerate the rate of learning from experience and in this way advance progress much more rapidly than is possible when trial and error is the basic learning approach. Thus the use of critique for development increases the organization's capacity to be effective in the future.

#### 9. Norms and standards that regulate behavior and performance support personal and organization excellence.

Much of our behavior is socially regulated by norms and standards to which each of us conforms. When norms and standards are set at high levels, and when people are committed to them, they stimulate the pursuit of excellence and con-

tribute to the satisfaction people derive from work.

An organization's human relationships are premised on mutual trust and respect when these nine principles of behavior are being applied. When any one of these principles is violated, human trust and respect is diminished by some amount.

Only through bringing these principles into daily use is it possible for an organization to maximize the involvement of its members in its success. It becomes possible to maximize the use of financial, technical, natural and human resources, not only in pursuit of the organization's success, but in ways that promote the satisfaction and health of organization members simultaneously.

When the approach to OD is geared to bringing these principles into daily use through a sound technology for translating theory to practice OD is a likely and vital aspect of change.

#### REFERENCES

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*Editor's Note: Part 3 of Blake and Mouton's "Why the OD Movement Is 'Stuck' and How to Break It Loose" focuses on OD technology for the future. Watch for it in your November Journal.*

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