

Forces of "Forced Leadership"

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Today training personnel are faced with the problem of how to integrate the principles of democratic leadership into the natural behavior of supervisors. It is recognized that leadership usually emerges when there is need for a leader. The kind of leadership that arises in the face of this need is determined in part by the nature of the prevailing situation. In some situations the tendency is greater for dictatorial leadership to arise while some situations are conducive to the emergence of democratic leadership. The nature of the situation often affects the nature of leadership.

Method Is Unique

This theory is basic to Forced Leadership Training which is a unique method in that a situation is created which tends to "force" the supervisors to assume democratic leadership. The supervisors while together in a training session develop a case study around a human relations problem. Next the trainees are divided at random into small groups of four or five each with instructions to go into a huddle and within a time limit bring back and present before the whole group an agreed upon solution.

In short, here is a situation in which several groups of trainees have a clearly defined problem before them with instructions to agree on a solution. A discussion leader is not formally designated. However, after getting into their little groups someone usually starts the ball

rolling and guides the thinking through to a solution. Various experiments indicate that this "leader" usually presents the solution before the whole group.

In the second session the same procedure is used with a different human relations problem. This time the so-called "leaders" of the first session are separated into one group while remaining non-leaders are randomly distributed into several small groups. In this way the non-leaders have another chance to guide the group toward a solution.

New Problem

The third session finds the group again with a new human relations problem clearly defined and awaiting solution. The leaders of the previous sessions are divided into small groups and the non-leaders are treated likewise. Once again the situation forces the non-leaders to assume leadership roles. The process of whittling down non-leaders continues in ensuing sessions until a minimum of two or three remain. In this manner the taking of leadership roles is maximized.

Forced Leadership Training occurs because of opportunity for free participation. Leaders are not formally designated, giving equal status to each supervisor. The group and not an individual is made responsible for finding a solution, thus making each member feel his efforts are needed.

Team work is fostered because trainees learn that each can not have things his way. Ideas, feelings and differences are expressed and they learn that there is more than one side to a problem. They become sensitive to each other's thinking which is a fundamental effect caused by the forces of the situation.

A Leader Emerges

The forces of the situation effect cooperative problem solving. Trainees become aware of each other's ability to present constructive and helpful suggestions. The trainee most helpful to the group is focused on by the other members. Through a very natural process a leader emerges spontaneously. The discussion is guided by his contribution and way of doing and not by position or authority if he were formally designated leader. He is influential rather than powerful. His position as leader is achieved rather than ascribed to him. A democratic form of leadership is evolved.

This kind of leadership is very desirable today because autocratic force only serves to beget force and often requires additionally force to dispel the disturbance. Imposing one's will on individuals by autocratic bossing is substituted by the indirect approach which attempts first to achieve the good will of the group. Solving the problem is a natural consequence.

Experience with training supervisors by forced leadership has revealed that the trainees feel that refraining from strict control is a sign of weakness. They are not aware that their effectiveness is actually increased when they share the solving of problems. Because of this

prevailing doubt, supervisors must experience democratic leadership before they will accept it. Unlike other forms of training, forced leadership provides ample opportunity for all supervisors to feel the surprising results of democratic leadership.

An important benefit of forced leadership training is that supervisors with superior ability and experience in guiding problem-solving are segregated from those of less ability and experience. Training methods should differentiate between degrees of leadership ability and experience or else supervisors who are more inclined to be leaders are perpetuated. Trainees needing leadership training take a back seat to those more naturally adapted to taking leadership roles.

Segregation Necessary

Segregation is necessary for without it non-leaders are constantly at a disadvantage. Under pressure to exceed their developed ability their form of participation fails to attract satisfying respect and attention. A better suggestion always seems to be presented which dampens their enthusiasm. They feel superfluous and become spectators rather than participants.

Some of these trainees attempt to gain respect by means other than constructive participation. They may become loud, impolite and extremely critical or indifferent, bored and uncooperative. Disturbing remarks replace sincere suggestions. Other trainees attempting to get something out of the session become irritated and the conference bogs down. The ironical fact is that many human relations training sessions become bogged

down because of poor human relations among the trainees.

The forces of the situation afford a handicap for trainees lacking leadership qualities by segregating them from trainees possessing more of these qualities. Experience with the method reveals that supervisors of like ability and experience seem to get along better together. Tensions and frustrations are less and participation seems more congenial and satisfying.

Some Rise To Occasion

To supervisors of superior ability and experience in leadership, segregation offers a challenge to compete with supervisors also having these qualities. Some rise to the occasion and meet the challenge successfully by tapping ability previously wasted. Supervisors meeting their match, however, learn what being led is like, which is another force exerting benefit in the forced leadership situation.

At the same time non-leaders used to being led are given opportunity and motivation to develop leadership. The methods of preceding leaders often serve to guide the aspirants and many improve upon them. Successful in their first experience at democratic leadership their interest and progress are maintained by advancing into groups of supervisors with similar experience. This process, continuing until all but a few have the "feel" of democratic leadership, develops supervisors lacking leadership while the leaders are forced to improve further or gain valuable experience in being led.

In other training methods the conference leader attempts to gain maximum participation by prescribing rules within which discussion takes shape. Talking too much, straying from the subject, needless interruptions to mention a few are thereby remedied. Often times the conference leader acquires more leadership experience than the trainees.

Ground rules are not necessary in forced leadership training because finding a solution is the group's responsibility and how they do it is part of their training. Besides, reliance upon their own resources to effectuate constructive participation is what their work situation demands. A dis-service is done to trainees when their participation is controlled other than through democratic leadership.

Group Agreement

Another value of forced leadership training occurs with respect to bringing back to the whole group each subgroup's solution. Tremendous pride is acquired by the group contributing a very meaningful and outstanding solution. On the other hand, loss of prestige does not occur if many or even all groups arrive at a common solution. Group agreement of this magnitude serves to make everyone feel that something worthwhile is accomplished. Furthermore, solutions agreed upon by supervisors in this manner have usually greater applicability on their jobs.

Forced Leadership Training is advantageous because group responsibility for problem solving and opportunity for unrestricted participation provide for many trainees the situation conducive for developing democratic leadership.

DID HE JUMP—OR WAS HE PUSHED?

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Such men have good potentials as future top-engineers and management should be cautious about diverting them from their preferred goal.

Every effort should be made to analyse the psychological motives which drive an engineer to voluntary study before selecting him, or before approving his own self-selection for executive development. If his continued study has been pointed only toward provision of an escape from his daily routine and the boredom of his job, it is possible that he will welcome the opportunity to explore administration if it can be shown that such exploration might enhance his future. He may be eager to exchange his interest in literature or languages, for example, for an interest in the principles of business administration.

On the other hand, if his continuing voluntary study has been pointed toward perfection of techniques in, say, creative art, he may be completely averse to exchanging the pleasure he derives from creative work for the mental effort required for his conversion from an engineer to an administrator.

It is possible that acquisition of administrative skills, even with incentives for advancement, can not provide him with the psychological satisfactions which he presently obtains or hopes soon to obtain through participation in creative art.

The maladjusted, incompetent engineer, frustrated and unhappy, is prone to select himself for executive development training in the hope of finding an

escape from engineering without suffering a loss of face. With a little of the luck on which he always depends, he hopes to make a new start among people who do not know about his past failures.

On The Move

Despite the fact that this type of person does not possess potentials for executive development, the records show that all too often he is able to worm himself into a training program without his true motives being discovered. Soon, however, he is on the move again. He is still unhappy, still frustrated, and still unwilling to heed the advice of the very people with whom he had hopes of associating himself professionally.

Perhaps the most valuable type of engineer for executive development is the individual who has already considered a sufficient number of the total factors involved to drive him to select himself for training as executive material. He may or may not have been continuing his formal education. He probably is active to some extent in civic and social affairs and this activity involves some degree of leadership within the groups with which he has associated himself. His motives are closely related to ambition. The rewards he has gained may or may not be tangible, but the satisfactions he has experienced never can be measured in economic credits.

There are many reasons why an engineer may be willing to embrace administration. When interest in administration is evidenced, management should explore that interest carefully. In some organizations, income opportunities may cause an engineer to turn to administration as a more lucrative field of endeavor.

An income barrier in the career of an ambitious engineer will cause him to evaluate his own aptitudes for other fields of work. If he decides that administration and management offer greater future monetary rewards than does engineering, he will be apt to forsake engineering in the belief that he is bettering his opportunities. It is the responsibility of management to determine whether such a decision on the part of the self-selected engineer is valid.

Selection methods which include measurements of growth-potentials, I.Q., adaptability, social outlook, political and religious tendencies, and various human relation factors are valuable yardsticks for this measurement. Screening also may include evaluation of the candidate's ability to express himself verbally and on paper, his reactions to various psychological pressures, his physical appearance and bearing, habits of dress, general health, and application of customary manners, courtesies, etc.

Responsibility for selection, or approval of self-selection often is delegated to a committee. When such techniques are employed, it is important that both the applicant and each member of the committee understand that soon the aspirant may become an understudy or competitor of any member of the committee. If the committee believes, after interviewing the candidate, that he has the necessary potentials for executive development and that he would make a valuable addition to the organizational unit of which any committee member is a part, it is almost a certainty that a successful selection will result.

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Management must be understood to be making only a tentative selection. Fulfillment must depend on the actual degree of development attained by the selected engineer. It is at this stage of the selection process that management can be of the most help to the candidate, for at this time the weaknesses of the applicant in scholastic and human relations areas can be most clearly discerned by this committee of his peers. It is important that each member of the committee be senior to the applicant insofar as his position in the organization is concerned.

It is psychologically important that efforts be made at time of selection to identify as accurately as possible all areas of administrative theory and operation with which an engineer already may be familiar. It would be discouraging for an engineer to be forced to wade through oceans of reading and to sit through hours of lectures and discussions on subject matter concerning which he already has as good working knowledge.

His opinion of techniques of administrative training, of administrators as a whole, and especially his opinion of those responsible for his individual training program, will be undermined if he is forced to follow repetitive courses. It is not too unusual to find an engineer qualified to expound on administrative principles and operating techniques. Experienced, high-level instructors and leaders are essential tools for an effective executive development program.

The tendency of modern administrative authorities to hold to a liberal philosophy is disturbing to most engineers. They are prone to be conservative in

their social outlook. They are normally staunch believers in a democratic state in which there are sufficient incentives that the college graduate and authority in a technical field may expect greater monetary return than even the skilled workers who depend on his output for application of their labor.

The engineering profession has not yet found competition so tough that it will readily concede to collective bargaining agents the right to negotiate their salary arrangements for them.

The problems discussed touch only a few which exist for engineers selected for conversion to administrators through formal training in executive development. Each individual is beset with his own bushel of psychological problems. These problems require decisions which he alone can make. It behooves management to learn all it can concerning the psychological outlook and motives of all candidates considered for executive development if a reasonable degree of successful selection is to result.

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