

SPEAKING FROM EXPERIENCE

A CYBERNETIC APPROACH TO OD

Guest Commentary
BY LEONARD C. HUDSON

- Is your organization achieving its potential?
- Are your policies and procedures inhibiting or increasing effectiveness?
- Is productivity and profitability eroding or improving?
- Is there bickering and politics evident in your organization?
- Are your objectives stifling rather than expective?
- Would you like to have common understanding and common commitments to your organization's goals?
- Are your human resource policies, procedures and practices encouraging creativity, developing potential, and rewarding excellence?

If your answers to the above questions are disconcerting to you, you are not alone. Many organizations in the United States are experiencing these problems. In recent years, many managers have been setting objectives, requesting commitment to those objectives, and have sat back watching as productivity eroded in their organization. As productivity has eroded, so has profitability and organizational tempo.

Many times the loss of cooperation, motivation, morale, harmony, and team spirit in an organization is the direct result of the organizational mechanics and its lack of human dynamics.

As productivity has declined we can either point fingers at the work force, or point the finger



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back at the organization to try to place fault. It is not the intent of this article to place blame, but try and pursue the directions for dramatic change in American organizations.

To deal with the dynamics of change, a management system for today and the future needs to be truly a cybernetic system with inputs feeding into it on a continuous basis. It must possess ways of constructive feedback or measurements from the various phases of the system. In effect, it must be a self-correcting system perpetuated by a closed loop or servo-mechanism.

An effective system of manage-

ment should be able to improve morale, increase productivity, improve profitability, encourage innovation, assure communication, encourage creativity, encourage organizational and individual actualization, and stimulate courageous, creative management.

In the book *Beyond Management by Objectives*, Joe Batten stated: "Modern managers and the managers of tomorrow are not pushers or directors, but rather leaders. They recognize the ineffectiveness of methods that push, compress, repress, depress, and rigidify. They are committed to leading, evoking, scheduling, and monitoring within a systematic framework. It is crucial that they become experts in clarifying, defining, and systematically accomplishing expectations. At the heart of all truly effective systems of management are clear, logical, and thoroughly communicated expectations."¹

With this goal in mind, in developing a management system for the future, the first concern is to recognize and uncover the organizational and individual possibilities so that expectations can be developed and implemented for results accomplishments.

The management system should be designed for an expective approach rather than a directive approach in human relations.

Observations of written and oral organizational language reveals that many organizations are

very directive in their objectives, procedures, manuals, and instructions. Employees are turned off. In my opinion, the organization language needs to be expective. The language should be evocative in nature. Expecting in a positive receptive manner, not a threatening manner.

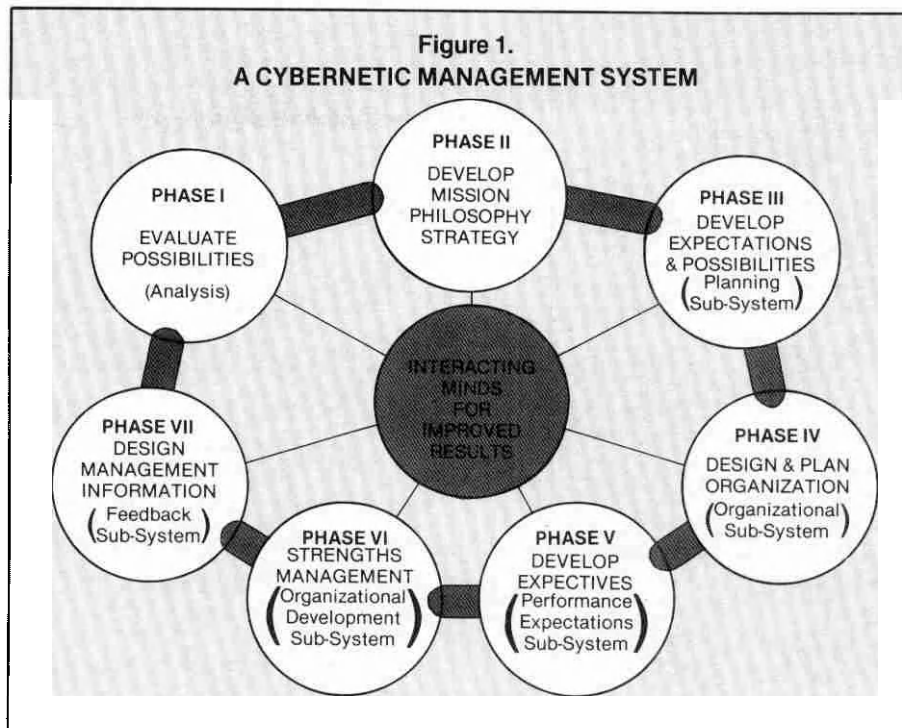
Research indicates that where an organization's management system is based on clear cut expectives, there is:

- Minimum politics
- Common perception of what needs to be done.
- Openness to communication.
- A positive working climate
- Greater commitment resulting in improved productivity.
- What is good for the organization, takes precedence over what is good for me.

Every manager from the top down should be searching for the possibilities in his or her organization to accomplish their organizational expectations, dreams or hopes. They are the mortar used in starting and building any organization. Every business is truly the result of expectations, dreams, and hopes.

If you will study Figure 1, which reflects the cybernetic system approach to a management system, you will see that Phase I is to foresee possibilities. Evaluating possibilities is an analytical step toward determining the possibilities and opportunities within an organization. This means evaluating the human dynamics and organizational mechanics in all elements of the organization in the search for organizational and individual improvement. We are placing the organization under the microscope to discover practical improvements in productivity and performance. Determining possibilities in this step is achieved through careful analysis and evaluation.

In Phase II the organization's mission, philosophy, creed and strategy are developed. The development of an organizational philosophy is of significance for a number of reasons, not the least of which is its contribution to economic survival and meeting a pay-



roll. An organization must actualize before individuals can actualize.

Harold McAlindon, in his book *Getting the Most Out of Your Job and Your Organization*, said: "All great organizations have a sound philosophical base. Shared values are one of their greatest strengths."

He also said, "The actualizing organization knows that the confronting of ideas helps to surface those that are truly relevant. Controversial ideas help to stimulate and synergize the entire workforce."² The management system should be designed to translate these ideas into possibilities.

The corporate philosophy provides the foundation for the full utilization of the organization's resources and strengths, and a unity of purpose throughout the organization, helping move that organization toward accomplishing its expectations.

A development of mission and philosophy helps insure that the system will be future-oriented by compelling the organization to evaluate where it stands today and where it wants to be in the future. When this action is developed from within the total organization, it will help insure the commitment of all its personnel.

Many organizations have a cor-

porate philosophy. Ideally, management systems designed for the future will be unique in that they will expect each section, department and division to also have a basic philosophy which fits within the parameters of the total organization's philosophy. A common understanding of the philosophy and mission of the organization for each of the sub-units sets the climate for the interacting minds working toward greater and improved results. Feedback and concurrence from all levels in the organization should be expected before the organizational philosophy is finally cast in bronze. You could say that this is the "Grand Design" phase of the system.

Phase III is specifically concentrated on developing expectations and possibilities. With the grand design as reference, key result areas, goals, expectations, strategy and tactics for profitability, management development, worker performance and attitude, marketing strategy, innovation needs, public relations, productivity, financial resources, organizational climate, and organizational possibilities are developed to insure maximum blending and integration of human and other resources. These expectations or organizational motives should pro-

vide direction and stretching expectives and become the foundation for obtaining identification and commitment for a fully functioning organization.

It is necessary that there be as much involvement and participation as practical in order to gain commitment. The "why" of the expectives should always be well communicated.

In Phase IV consideration is directed to reporting, coordinating, and controlling relationships through designing the organizational structure and developing organizational manuals to assure wise staffing and logical deployment of strengths. It should include a "possibilities function" or department which will seek input from all members of the organization for future possibilities, analyzing and evaluating this information, and recommending it to management.

To maximize and obtain the highest degree of performance, productivity, and profitable results, the emphasis needs to be

concentrated on developing and instituting an orderly method, structure, and system for integrating the talents of people, facilities, equipment, money, time and energy.

In Phase V the expectations of the organization and of each division become performance expectives. Divisional or departmental functional results requirements

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are tailored to assure the fulfillment of company expectations, prepare appropriate job standards, performance appraisal and operating procedures, and provide for compensation based upon results. This Phase should provide a living process of feedback and evaluation.

In Phase VI, the concern is with the identification of human strengths, programs to develop, utilize, and measure these strengths. An organizational system to inventory human resource strengths should be implemented so that individual talents can be quickly identified and logically assigned for special projects or promotion. The goal is the blending and meshing of individual people strengths through a positive sound management system.

Development programs placing an emphasis on coaching and training, delegation, decision making, and integrating the total value system of the organization throughout the managerial and supervisory groups should be conducted.

In Phase VII, a management information sub-system is designed to provide continuous feedback. We now need measurement methods that will communicate and report the progress of the system, and provide for the opportunities to modify and improve the organization for even greater results. The feedback system must furnish

all executives with current, accurate operating data to measure results accountability and provide information for future management decisions. (In many cases joint accountability may also be determined for greater team effort and results.)

Phase VII leads back into Phase I as the organization continues its research to uncover possibilities and maximize opportunities. To be cybernetic the system must provide continuous flow through each phase and in so doing provides for correction and re-fueling.

In summary, the management system of now and the future must be cybernetic with cybernetic subsystems. The system must have methods for integrating organizational mechanics with the human dynamics of the organization. The result will be a totally functioning organization-motivated, harmonious, and committed by developing a clear and complete system of expectations which will identify, evoke, and use the strengths of all resources in the organization, the most important of which is people. It is through human productivity, gained through human understanding and people development, that the true results will happen.

The system should dissolve defenses within the organization and improve individuality, vulnerability and openness to build for cooperation and team effort.

"Riches can be mined" if management operates within a system that is continually fueled with the interaction of human minds and contains sub-systems that discover organizational and individual possibilities and expectations and expect these possibilities to become results: a total integrated cybernetic system of management. — Leonard C. Hudson

REFERENCES

1. Batten, Joe, *Beyond Management by Objectives*. AMACOM, 1980.
2. McAlindon, Harold, *Getting the Most Out of Your Job and Your Organization*. AMACOM, 1980.

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