

"WE'VE SPENT FAR TOO MUCH TIME, ATTENTION AND MONEY MAKING DEVELOPMENT A COMFORTABLE PROCESS. LET'S NOW BEGIN TO REALLY FOCUS ON THE PHILOSOPHY THAT ALL DEVELOPMENT IS SELF-DEVELOPMENT!"

YOU CAN'T DEVELOP ANOTHER

BY ROY W. WALTERS

We are in an era of grave managerial shortage. . . . Knowledgeable academicians are writing and lecturing about this subject. They cite evidence from their studies and research in business, education and government organizations, of the management failures in these institutions. They report on demographic data showing birth rate gaps 25 to 30 years ago.

Business executives are speaking out on the subject and some of them are pushing their organizations to improve their manpower planning and management development efforts.

I share the concerns of all these people. But my examination of the situation, and my experience in working with organizations, convinces me that there is a major lack of understanding about the development process and this is contributing greatly to the issues.

It appears to me that the thrust of most efforts is toward developing managers, i.e., doing things *to them, for them and with them* so

that they will develop. The failure to recognize that no manager can develop another manager and that all development is self-development is the cause of our problems. This thought is very disturbing to many managers. It hurts their self-image. They have deluded themselves for years that they have been developing their people. They hold rigidly to this position. When working on this matter with managers they immediately become defensive and use Vince Lombardi as their chief model. They say, "look at the great teams he developed" or "look at the number of great all-pros he developed."

I recognize Lombardi as a tough taskmaster, a brilliant football tactician. But he didn't develop these players. Instead he gave each man the opportunity to qualify for his teams by setting tough, demanding, high standards. But the fact remains that given these parameters, each player developed himself. The opportunity was there. They could push themselves to qualify under his standards or they could not. It was up to them. Many availed themselves of this

opportunity. Many did not, It was their choice, not Lombardi's.

Other examples abound. General Patton, Harold Geneen of IT&T, Manager Joe McCarthy of the Yankees, Admiral Hyman Rickover are names that readily come to mind. Examination of their managerial styles indicates that they, too, were tough, set high standards, and gave extensive responsibility to others. I feel certain that none of them believed that they developed their subordinates. As with Lombardi, they gave opportunities to their people. Those that took advantage and knew that none of their bosses were going to do things for them, succeeded.

What Can Organizations Do?

Given this shortage problem, what can organizations do? I believe there are two main areas where we can immediately begin to change. They are: our incumbent managers and those we will hire over the years.

What can we do with our present cadre of managers to help them understand that they are the ones most responsible for their

own development?

First, those above them can quit trying to develop them and adopt a new posture. Instead of telling them that they should go to this or that management training class, they can review with the subordinate specific classes that in their opinion address the performance deficiencies noted and let the person decide which one he or she wants to attend and at what time.

Several instances of this kind of handling will quickly communicate a story quite different from the previous posture of "big daddy knows what's best for you." This method will quickly produce an additional set of evaluation data. The boss can see how the subordinate makes decisions, how he or she manages their time and the quality of their decisions.

Second, the boss can quit telling the subordinate what to do in specific situations. A preferred role is to discuss all aspects and alternative decision possibilities and permit the subordinate to make the decision. Years of telling people what to do can build a very large dependency trait and continually communicate the "they know what's best" syndrome. Malcolm Knowles, an eminent educator who stresses the concept and theory of *competency development*, recognizes that *"we have convincing evidence that adults have a deep psychological need to be self-directing in their learning, even though they have been conditioned by their previous schooling to take a passive stance toward teachers."*¹

Even if the subordinate knows of a better route or a different course they can never feel responsible for their own decision-making development. Again a spin-off is managerial performance evaluation data for the boss. If the boss constantly drives the car the subordinate will never learn to drive nor feel responsible for learning to drive. Of course, this means managing with a little more risk. Most bosses are reluctant to do this.

Third, bosses can begin to design subordinate responsibilities that gradually increase in magnitude. Once a subordinate masters a set of responsibilities there is

little additional growth potential in that position. There are not enough new assignments to move them, so something must be done to continue their development at their present position. This means cleaving portions of the boss's job and giving these responsibilities to the subordinate. This thought is very threatening to most bosses. So they clutch desperately to what they have and those below them starve.

Boredom and restlessness result and those trapped fault the organization for what is happening to them. Few have the courage to break out of their trap because they fail to understand their responsibilities for their own development. Giving them further growth opportunities, within the present assignment, generally prevents this. It communicates that the organization is interested in individual development and is not bound by structural constraints. And it quickly continues to reinforce those who are willing to break out of their trap.

Those items discussed for aiding present managers should not be looked upon as being easy and simple. Deep-seated attitudes and feelings, mainly about control, have resulted from years of operating in a manner that is based on a principle that managers do in fact develop subordinates. So beginning to change that will never be easy.

Handling New Hires

Turning now to what may be a more fruitful and certainly easier area, let's look at the handling of new hires intended for the managing ranks.

It behooves any management that recognizes the development as self-development issues and wants to resolve them, to immediately design an effort that clearly communicates to those new hires that they are the ones most responsible for their own development. The organization assumes the responsibility of letting that happen but each person has to do it himself or herself.



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Immediately after being placed on the payroll I would want these new hires to be involved in an orientation seminar of a different variety. I wouldn't want to waste time with lengthy exposures to key managers explaining their functions, and to explanations of insurance plans, disability plans, vacation policies, etc., etc. My orientation would have two objectives:

1. To initiate the process of communicating to the new hires that they must assume primary responsibility for their own growth and development in management ability.

2. To help the new hires take the first steps in planning a long-range personal-development program.

Most hires are hired to be managers. We may have a few specialist hires such as chemists, mathematicians, statisticians, actuaries, etc. But management's main proprietary responsibility is to determine in minimum time whether or now they can manage. I believe

we greatly underestimate their learning capacities and we are rigidly locked into an insistence that these new hires must know technical details. "How can they manage people with technical competency if they don't know the details?"

I don't believe that it's necessary for bosses to know as much or more of the technical details as their subordinates do. I further believe that it's a managerial strength to know that you don't know. We can't afford the luxury of the time for new hires to learn technical details. We need that time to learn about their managerial competency. Furthermore, most new hires don't know if they can manage. They too will become bored and restless if they don't have meaningful responsibilities. Let's quickly put them to work managing and satisfy their learning appetites by having them learn the technical details while managing.

The content of this four or five-day seminar would include designs

to assist their understanding of: basic work-motivation theory, basic learning theory, and human growth and development theory. Other designs would assist their examination of superior and subordinate roles and responsibilities, criteria for performance evaluation, and the importance and use of performance feedback. During this orientation they would be required to begin planning their own specific personal-development plans with the understanding that they would be expected to constantly update their plans.

Essential to my model of management development is the understanding that each of these new hires will report directly to a hand-picked, specially trained operating middle-management boss. These bosses will be those who possess those qualities we would all define as "good" qualities, those we would want future managers to emulate. I don't believe that organizations are cognizant of what our society has learned about basic learning theory. They seem to concentrate only on conscious learning, i.e., technical knowledge, managerial knowledge, interpersonal relationships knowledge, etc. This learning requires effort on the part of the learner. They can ignore or reject any portion or all of it. Organizations ignore completely the more mystifying learning-subconscious learning. This area pertains to standards, value systems, styles of management, informal communications systems, informal reward systems, willingness to take calculated risks, etc. This learning requires no effort and it's continuous . . . management can do nothing to stop it.

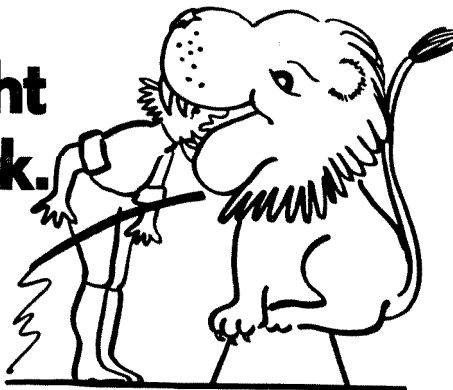
So the question management must ask about the management-development process is, "from whom do you want these new people to learn these subconscious things?" From my point of view it is from our best managers. To give them bosses who aren't the best doesn't appear sound.

Those bosses selected should have most, if not all, of the following qualifications:

- Has shown a willingness to try new ideas

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- Has an outstanding record of past operating achievements
- Has demonstrated the ability to delegate effectively
- Should be firm in his or her beliefs, yet not inflexible
- Should be known to have high work standards and high values
- Should have demonstrated the ability to effectively develop subordinates
- Has demonstrated possession of a high energy level
- Should have confidence in his or her own ability
- Should have demonstrated courage by showing willingness to take risks where required.

Once selected, the bosses too should be exposed to an orientation seminar that has these objectives:

- To pass along what is known — from social science research and business research — about the process and problems of growth and development of young people.
- To guide and accustom the bosses to think about the kinds of work assignments which will facilitate the growth in management ability of their newly hired recruits.
- To focus attention on the problems surrounding the process of appraisal of managerial ability.

Role Model Bosses

My experience leads me to believe that only by explicitly communicating to new hires that they must develop themselves and by placing them under well-prepared role-model bosses who thoroughly understand their responsibilities, can we hope that management development succeeds.

Such tandem arrangements should produce not only the base of understanding of this development philosophy but managerial performance results usually within a year to 18 months.

Once understood and thoroughly engrained in the fabric of the development process, it is just a question of time until the entire organization is operating in such a manner.

We no longer can afford the luxury of highly structured training

courses to which people are "sent," zealously hawked and guarded by training specialists and believed in as the answer to developing managers. The shift must be made to line managers, thoroughly prepared for their role, and oriented toward meaningful work assignments with significant responsibilities.

John Gardner, previously Secretary of HEW and Ex-Chairman of Common Cause says: *"For the self-renewing man, the development of his own potentialities and the process of self-discovery never ends. It is a sad but unarguable fact that most human beings go through their lives only partially aware of the full range of their abilities.*

"The development of abilities is at least in part of a dialogue between the individual and his environment. If he has it to give and the environment demands it, the ability will develop. Any small boy with real ability to wield his fists is likely to discover that ability fairly early. The little girl with the gift for charming grownups will have no trouble discovering that talent. But most abilities are not so readily evoked by the common circumstances of life.

"Most of us have potentialities that have never been developed simply because the circumstances of our lives never called them forth."²

The management development job is to call them forth. The best boss is one who understands what really excites newly hired management people — what motivates them. He knows that working people get satisfaction only if they have a chance to achieve something, if they get recognition for their achievements (task-centered not human relations centered), if they get real responsibility, if they are given opportunities to move on to more difficult or rigorous tasks and if they are constantly given opportunities to learn new things. Only these will build a real commitment to development.

We've spent far too much time, attention and money making development a comfortable process. Let's now begin to really focus on the philosophy that all develop-

ment is self-development. Remember you can't develop another person. You can only set the conditions for it to happen. If they don't, we can't afford to prop them up.

REFERENCES

1. Knowles, Malcolm, *Training and Development Journal*, July 1978.
2. Gardner, John, *Self-Renewal*, Harper and Row, 1963.

Roy W. Walters spent more than 25 years in line and staff positions in the Bell Telephone system. In 1960 he was director of Employment and Development at AT&T. In that position he was responsible for designing and directing the Bell System effort to recruit and develop 3500 college graduates a year. There he became known as a leading developer of new philosophies, programs and methods for effective utilization of human resources. While at AT&T he was responsible for the first empirical research into application of Job Enrichment. In 1967 he established his own consulting firm which is recognized as a leader in the field of assisting organizations in the recruiting and development of talent from all sources and in redesigning work and work systems so that employees can perform at their optimum level of ability.

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