

# A Management Philosophy

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**T**HE PROFESSION of management is gaining more and more recognition each day the world over. It is most appropriate that management as a profession be recognized in Tulsa where American Airlines has its largest concentration of people and I congratulate you on the inauguration of your management group.

## Management Ideals

At the start of such an organization, it seems appropriate to me to discuss a management philosophy or goals or ideals. It doesn't matter what you call them, but it is important to select a set of ideals toward which you want to work. Let me tell you of a particular philosophy which appeals to me personally. This creed or philosophy has to do chiefly with the individual working relationships in an organization. Like much management philosophy, it isn't new. The form in which I present it to you may be different. I am going to talk about the rights and obligations of management.

When I speak of rights, I am using the term because it is convenient. These rights are not like your rights as a citi-



G. K. GRIFFIN

zen, rights that are inherently yours. Nor are they contractual rights that grow out of an agreement you make with someone. These rights are delegated rights; you don't have them unless your boss delegates them to you. They are delegated in the same way that the authority and responsibility which go with the job are delegated, and they are delegated for the same reasons: to get the job done, to enable you to draw together your people and

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your other resources to accomplish the task the company has set for you. Now that I have defined the kind of rights I am talking about, let's look at them:

### The Rights of Management

First, I believe that *a man in management has a right to know who his boss is*. That sounds simple, and it should be. I don't know whether you have been in a position where you had more than one boss; or perhaps you have and didn't realize it. A man with more than one boss will ultimately fail. He may like one man more than another; he may like one assignment more than another; or he may feel that one assignment is more important than another; or that one will get him further in his career. One thing is certain, one boss and that boss' assignments will get less attention than the other. When that happens, the man is a failure in the eyes of that particular boss and the man's record will suffer.

A man's boss is not his boss' boss. He can get into the same kind of difficulty I have just described by following the lead of his boss' boss. Nor is his boss the staff man, the man to whom he may look for technical guidance or direction.

Naturally a man has to work with more people than his boss, but his boss comes first, and he has a right to know who that man is.

The second right I believe a man has is *to know what is expected of him*. We can write a job description, I am sure, that will cover all the foremen in this room, but that is only part of what is expected of a foreman. He needs to know more—the particular responsibilities that are his which distinguish him

from all the other foremen in the organization. He needs to know what his authority is and its limits. He needs to know all the things that his boss expects which are often never directly expressed. He wants to know when his boss is giving him a suggestion and when he is giving him an order. He needs to know something of his working relationships with all the other people in the organization with whom he deals. If these are clearly spelled out, his teamwork and his initiative will be improved.

I believe that *a manager has a right to be taught; the right to an opportunity to learn*. He is entitled to day-to-day coaching. He should receive instruction in technical subjects that have to do with his job; and further, he should have the opportunity to learn more about business management and about human relations, about the company history and its organization.

*A manager has the right to know how he is doing*. This is perhaps more neglected than any of the others. We can't expect great improvement in a supervisor unless we tell him where and how we believe he can improve. Again during his day-to-day coaching we can let him know how he is doing and how to do better. It takes more: a periodic summary or review of his progress. Call it a periodic appraisal or a progress report—the name doesn't matter. At such a time, the man's supervisor must be specific, frank and constructive. Only to the degree that he is specific, frank and constructive will he accomplish improvement. Discussions will be even more fruitful to the extent that the supervisor encourages his subordinate to discuss his problems, impressions and ob-

stacles in a frank, constructive and specific fashion.

A manager can know better how he is doing if he has some yardsticks to measure the accomplishments of his part of the organization. A man can often construct better yardsticks for himself than his boss can, but they must measure progress toward the company's goals.

A yardstick for an engine overhaul shop which is based entirely on the number of engines turned out would give a misleading impression if the performance of these engines was poor. By training, discussion and yardsticks, we must let a man know how he is doing.

I believe that *a manager has the right to be wrong*. I am not speaking of gross carelessness; we all know the serious consequences of that in our business. Nor am I speaking of misconduct. I am talking about the usual errors of judgment. If we expect a man to learn to be a manager, we must accept some errors as the price of that learning. It happens in every phase of life. If a man tries, he will at times make a mistake.

I believe that *a man has a right to know company plans that will affect him directly*. In industry there are few occasions to ask for blind obedience. A knowledge of what is about to happen will improve teamwork, encourage initiative and give a supervisor a better chance to create an intelligent interest on the part of the people who work for him.

*Closely related to this is the right to know why*. Again this knowledge enables a manager to more intelligently direct the efforts of his unit. It will enable him to improve his initiative. If

he knows the "why", his decisions will inevitably be sounder than if he does not.

I believe that *a man has the right to talk; the right to express himself*. This includes even the right to criticize and question. It means that he has the right to think and the right to contribute to decisions. This right to talk includes too the right of a man to be consulted on matters that have been delegated to him. It isn't logical to give a man a job and then make decisions affecting that job without consulting him first.

I believe that *a manager has a right to rewards*. And by rewards I mean pay, the privileges and recognition that should go with a management job. These are important to all of us and constitute another topic in themselves. I am as much interested in them as you are.

Finally, I believe that *a manager has the right to opportunity*: to prepare himself for a better job; the opportunity to express a preference when a better job comes along; to be considered for it; and to be selected if he is the best man. If he is not selected, I believe he has the right to be told why.

So much for management's bill of rights.

### The Obligations of Management

Every right, whether it is inherent, contractual or the kind we have been talking about here, has a corresponding obligation or responsibility. First of all, I believe that *if a man has been delegated these rights, his primary obligation is to pass these rights along to the men who work for him*.

Now let's go over the list again and see what obligations a man accepts when this bill of rights becomes his.

*When a man knows who his boss is, then he should serve him well.* He has the obligation to work with many others in the organization. As his supervisor's representative, he owes that to his boss too.

When he knows what is expected of him, *then he should do it, do it all, and do it well.*

*He has the obligation to make the most of his opportunities to learn.* Many of you here in Tulsa have the advantage of a head start in management development. This program we intend to extend to all the management people in the company. It will not be handed to anyone on a silver platter. A good manager will have an obligation to take full advantage of it.

When a man knows how he is doing, *he has an obligation to improve his performance;* to listen to his supervisor's constructive criticism and to work conscientiously on the weaknesses that he finds in him. He has an obligation to put his strong points to work for the benefit of himself and the company.

When a man has been given the right to be wrong, *he has an obligation to be wrong as infrequently as possible.* A man with a poor batting average can't be kept on the team. He has an obligation to learn from his mistakes and he need not wait for a big mistake to learn. You know from experience that when our problems are analyzed, we rarely find one big mistake—instead we find an accumulation of smaller mistakes by a number of people. If you have contributed some of these, learn from them.

When a man knows what is coming, *he should anticipate his problems, and, as his part in the overall job appears clearer, improve his timing and his judgment.*

When a man knows the "why" of what he is asked to do, *then let him better employ his initiative and judgment.* He will then have a better foundation on which to use them.

When a man has the right to express himself, *he is certainly obligated to think, and to contribute constructively, and to make specific suggestions.* Generalities will contribute little to a discussion leading to a decision.

If he is questioning his superior's plans or proposals, he can do so only on these conditions: the facts are wrong, or the facts are incomplete; or the reasoning is wrong, or the reasoning is incomplete—it must be one of these four. Having made his contribution, when his boss makes a decision, then he has an obligation to carry it out. That must be the end of the conversation.

*Certainly it is obvious that a man should earn the rewards we spoke of and certainly he should live up to the opportunities which present themselves.*

### Application of Ideals

That is it. That is one philosophy—one that appeals to me. I believe it is an ideal to work for. You have read and heard other philosophies and will learn of many more after this one. The great difficulty is in their application. The important thing is to select one and put it to work. I know how hard that is. You will have here in this group an enviable opportunity to discuss all of these ideas and their application. In that I wish you the best of luck.