

Managing The Behavior Of Man

Using Behavioral Science in Training

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Is there a place for behavioral science in the management context? Is behavioral science too "ivory tower" for operating management? Does the knowledge of contemporary behavioral science better equip a manager or supervisor to carry out his assignments and tasks? Can knowledge of behavioral science influence the manner in which inevitable conflict is handled?

This article will look briefly at past efforts in the application of behavioral science to management practice and will propose a viewpoint that seems applicable in light of present knowledge and past experience.

In Memoriam

As soon as one man began measuring facets of the behavior of another man, industry and business (and all other forms of organized life) opened its eyes and ears hoping to gather ideas for a better competitive position. The history of the science of human behavior (in all its various forms) can be traced in

industry because industry has been one step behind the trends of this infant field of scientific pursuit. In spite of blind alleys and frustrations resulting from the application of unproved theories and marginal data, industry continues to search for more satisfactory methods of administering the human side of the business.

This search is justified due to the role which people and their complex relationships play in the industrial context. If industry were sterilized of the "faults" of human behavior and the conflicts of interpersonal relations, then management would no longer need to seek solutions in this area. However, the human animal has long ago justified its existence and we are faced with the task of minimizing faults and maximizing skills and potentials.

"Growth Pains"

In his efforts to understand man the behavioral scientist has encountered many false starts, blind alleys, and un-

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answered questions. These "growth pains" of an emerging science are natural and to be expected.

I am prone to forgive these "growth pains" in this new field. Let us not forget that since the signing of the Declaration of Independence mathematics and physics have both shuddered with growing pains even though they are held to be invincible bastions of fact. In the 1800's Gauss pulled the rug from beneath the field of mathematics and geometry. In the early part of this century Einstein overthrew mathematical and physical "fact" with his concept of relativity. It is shocking to realize that mathematics, physics, in fact all of the "pure" sciences, are but man-made fables having the semblance of fact.

Thus we may expect this infant study of human behavior to falter and wander as it attempts to develop itself into a full blown science.

Though each of these falterings have added to the growing storehouse of knowledge in the behavioral sciences, some distrust for behavioral science has been generated in the management community. Management has been close on the heels of each movement taken by the behavioral sciences. Before the ink dried on the academic journals reporting a new theory, some management representative wrote a new training program, or a new management code or practice incorporating this creative but untried theory. Failure should have been anticipated: but the warnings were rarely heeded. The faults which management and industry found in this infant field would not have received such exposure if management had not gambled so heavily and then needed a scapegoat to soothe the pains of their losses. In-

deed psychology has wandered devious paths (relative to the path of management); but, the disastrous results of these experimentations would have been reduced if management had been quicker to question, "wither do we goest?" rather than ask, "why did you lead me here?"

"Internal Psychology"

Let us then proceed, taking each step with measured anticipation and keeping a close eye on map and compass.

We've used a heading, "In Memoriam." Who died?

Let us say that there have been two deaths that need attention. One, let us hope that we have seen the end of management blindly following the closest psychologist or behavioral scientist. For lack of better reason, there are so many of them any more it is a prodigious task to attempt to follow them all. Also, let us hope that being forced to select from the many fields of behavioral science, management will choose those areas which are applicable to the industrial or business context.

In its early years psychology was interested in what I will call "internal psychology." Broadly speaking this is the study of the human mind, emotions, feelings, attitudes, interests, motivations, skills, etc. The primary focus of internal psychology is the study of how man's behavior is influenced by factors that lie within the framework of his being. As a result of that initial direction in the field of psychology, management allowed itself to be led the same route as it sought answers, methods, or laws that would help run the human side of the business. Consequently we have seen great efforts by management to apply doctrines of "internal psychology."

For example: Test, and test, and re-test all job applicants and employees to make absolutely sure that he has the proper internal ingredients necessary for the job.

For example: Memorize the primary motives and appeal to these motives in management practice.

For example: The axiom "get to know your people" has inspired managerial psychoanalysis.

For example: Subordinate failure and mis-behavior is commonly held to be the result of some pitfall in the individual man whose behavior is not in line with the company's or manager's norm.

The Objections

And, what are the results of management attempting to apply the doctrines of "internal psychology"? The critical mass necessary for the explosion seems to have accumulated around the time of William H. Whyte's book "The Organization Man." But the explosion did not consist of a loud bang and an eventual clearing of the smoke. Instead, a rumbling chain-reaction was formed and fire-bolts were aimed at the very heart of management philosophy. Great objections were raised to organizational psychoanalysis. The probing fingers of the psychometrician were smacked and cries of mental manipulation, forced conformity, and regimentation were heard from many quarters. The common man with which we are so fortunately endowed and so closely related objected to having his behavior formed by encroachments on his personality, mentality, and personal motivations.

And I think he was right in his objections.

The last line of defense of individual privacy would be the human mind and the battle was drawn when this last vestige of individuality was being threat-

ened. Even ten years after Whyte's book, rumblings of this invasion of privacy are heard as union leaders demand integrity for their membership. It would seem that an invasion of this bastion of integrity called the human mind has backfired. Let us then call this death number two, assuming that the illness was fatal and that this destructive meddling strategy is not playing opossum.

Preview

Management seems bent upon guiding, influencing, or changing the behavior of its subordinates. How can this change or influence be accomplished?

In recent years the behavioral scientists tell us that human behavior is not solely the result of forces or pressures within us. Behavior is seen as a compromise between those forces which are inside of the man himself, the proper domain of the "internal psychologist," and those forces which impinge upon the man from his environment.

Reading Figure 1 in the form of a sentence, we would say that all behavior is a compromise between forces within the individual and forces acting on the individual from the outside.

Behavior is therefore not a direct extension of the internal forces (motivations, etc.) of the individual. Behavior is not solely caused by psychic powers and unseen mental currents. Behavior is in great part caused by the environment.

The environment expresses itself in terms of demands or expectations and can be broken into two categories, the physical environment, and the interpersonal environment.

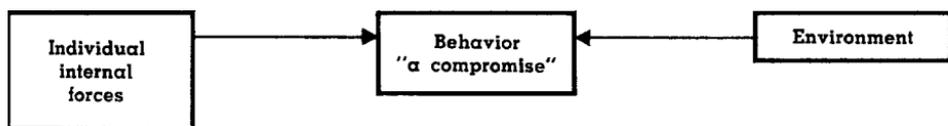


Figure 1. Behavioral Forces

By physical environment we mean the machines, tools, heat, light, and temperature (etc.). In the interpersonal category we have the expectations or demands of the man's supervisor, his fellow workers, his union committeeman, and others.

When we speak of internal forces, we are talking of those basically consistent forces that influence our behavior from within, such as a man's intelligence, his metabolism, and those deeply entrenched factors of personality and interest.

Let us develop the structure of those factors which cause the behavior of a typical production employee.

For the average production employee the physical environment consists of his machine and other machines in the area. It consists of his tools, the temperature, light, and noise level around him.

The interpersonal environment involves his relationships with his boss (and others upward in the organization), his fellow workers, his committeeman, maintenance personnel, the inspector and others.

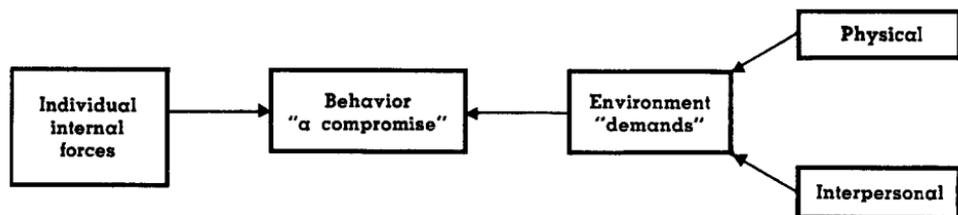


Figure 2. Environmental Factors

We now have a representative plan of the factors in the work context which cause this employee's behavior.

Supervisory Control

For the supervisor this has immediate importance and application. It is easily seen that the supervisor has power, control, or influence only on the right hand side of our behavior plan. The supervisor can control the environment in

which the man works (in which he is expected to behave). The supervisor can control the machines, tools, and room temperature. He can control his own demands upon the employee. At the same time the supervisor can influence the pressures or demands that other people make upon the employee.

The important thing to recognize is that the supervisor has no control over the internal forces that are in part caus-

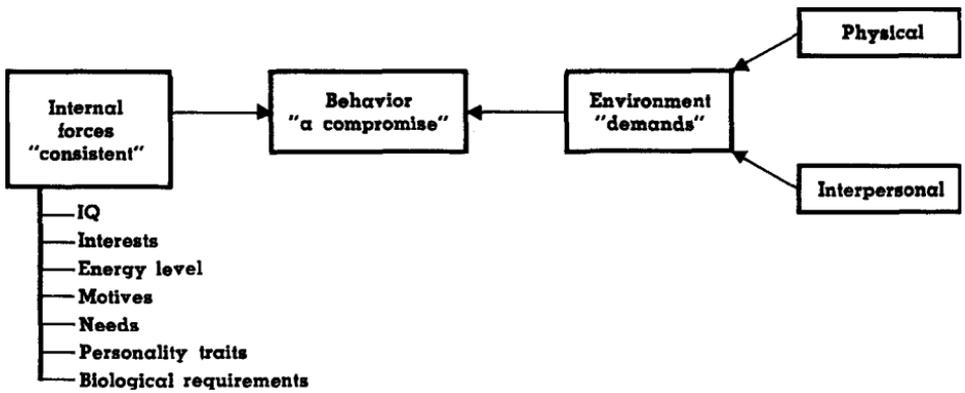


Figure 3. Structure of Behavior Factors

ing the man's behavior. Even if the supervisor knew what all of those internal forces were, he couldn't specify which one was causing what behavior; nor, could he do a thing about altering the internal forces. Indeed, changes in the environment may cause an individual to change his view-points, attitudes, etc.; but, the individual himself makes these changes. The supervisor cannot

outwardly re-arrange the man's mental furniture.

This then opens new doors for management. If management can't effectively control or influence behavior by changing factors within the man, then maybe management can control behavior by creating or controlling the environmental conditions which will precipitate the behavior that is desired.

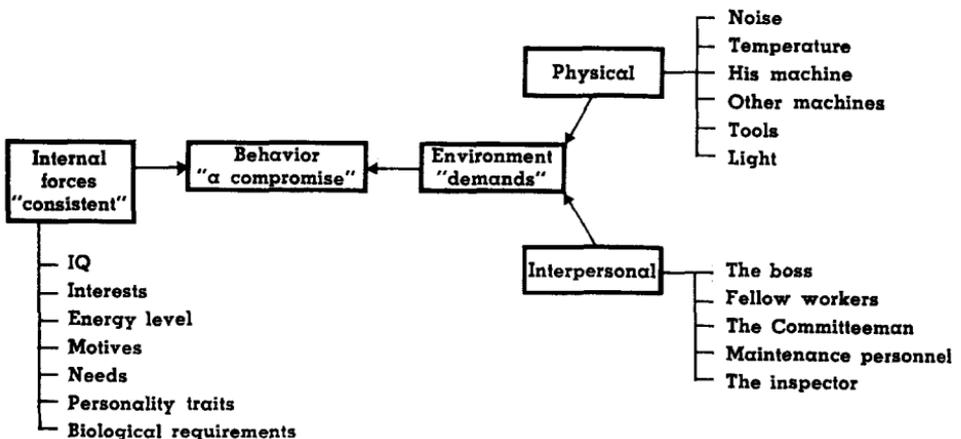


Figure 4. Interpersonal Relationships

Physical Environment

Immediately one thinks of pastel colors, air conditioned work areas, and softly spoken "friendly phrases." If this were the level of sensitivity that was needed our task would be easy. The human seems conscious of more subtle things. Oh, the color of the walls may make a difference, but the environment consists of far more complex and minute artifacts. And, it is not unreasonable that the human is sensitive to these artifacts since all behavior (a precious commodity) is in compromise with the demands and expectations that the environment places upon him.

The employee's physical environment is more than his machine, the temperature of the room, or the candlepower of the light. His physical environment consists of his machine indeed; but, it also includes the dependability of that machine, the machine cleanliness, its reliability, its speed, and the demands it makes on his physical skills, observational abilities, agility, etc. To say that two men on similar machines in the same shop have the same environment is a gross error in observation and a gross insult to the sensitivity of the men.

Interpersonal Relationships

The gross variations in physical environment are overshadowed by the interpersonal environment. Men are not social isolates. Though the organization chart or the work place layout may show them as individual isolated elements (rather like machines), this is a gross mis-interpretation. Man inevitably associates with his fellows and in doing so establishes interpersonal ties. These ties take the form of mutual expectations

placed by each individual on the others in his network of relationships.

As "A" and "B" relate, regardless of their organizational level, they immediately establish and thereafter revise a long list of expectations and offerings which they see as the core of their relationship. By means of verbal and non-verbal communications, "A" says, "I expect certain things and I will offer certain things into this relationship." "B" counters with the same statement.

It can be seen that the degree to which these expectations and offerings are in harmony determines the cohesiveness of the relationship.

As an aside it might be observed that management's great concern for communications is centered in this area. It is communication that transmits these expectations and offerings to and from the relating participants.

The interpersonal expectations which are placed on the man are a big part of his environment. Whether the expectations are from his co-workers, his committeeman, his supervisor, or what have you, his behavior will be a compromise between the factors inside of him and the expectations placed upon him. This compromise that the individual works out is in response to all of the factors that he is dealing with. The over-powering, over-demanding, bullish boss may see the subordinates rebellious behavior as anything as a compromise; but, to the subordinate manifesting the behavior, it is the safest route between all of the obstacles or expectations.

Conclusion

I am saying that management has come to the end of its rope in its attempts to achieve "proper" behavior by

trying to change the individual's motives or other internal factors. Now management must learn to control the environment in which it expects behavior. If management is faced with undesirable behavior then it should look at the environment it has created and eliminate those factors which are precipitating rebellion or distaste. Management cannot control the innards of its subordinates, it can only practically and morally control the environment which it provides for those subordinates.

Application

The thinking I have presented would seem to dictate a new course for management as well as a new direction for management development personnel. Traditionally management development personnel, supervisory trainers, etc., have bent their efforts toward making the manager an "internal psychologist." The futility of this move seems more and more evident. These past efforts have attempted to acquaint the supervisor with the internal forces of his people and then hope that his knowledge will enable him to better control or manipu-

late behavior. It's probably a good thing these efforts weren't successful because I'm not sure that the captains of industry want their management and supervision manipulating I.Q., personality, and values. To control or influence behavior may be necessary to get the job done; but, the ethics of the situation require that the employee be left with some privacy of thought and opinion.

For the future it would seem that management development personnel must aim their efforts toward making management more conscious of the environment which it is providing and more sensitive to the demands which it is making upon subordinates. Specifically how management must change environments to elicit productive behavior should be left in the hands of those immediately involved. The role of the behavioral scientist is to classify data into "if-then" pictures, *if* I provide environment "X" *then* I can expect behavior "Y." Faced with facts and alternatives, the manager is left with the dignified privilege of making his own decisions rather than being forced to adopt the particular style of leadership that is currently in vogue.

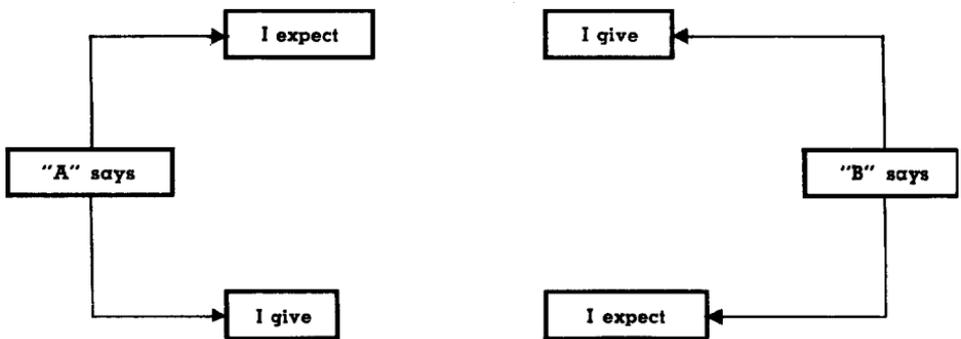


Figure 5. Expectations and Offerings Relationship