

# The Individual Management Development Program

By DANNY G. LANGDON

If needs assessment is a vital function in identifying and developing an effective and efficient training program, then it is no less important in the implementation of the program on an ongoing basis. This is the foundation upon which rests the Individual Management Development Program of Morrison-Knudsen (MK).

## Management training needs

Morrison-Knudsen is a large (35,000 employees), diversified construction, design and engineering firm operating worldwide. Indeed, the management function is in some sense its primary resource, ranging from contract work that is strictly a construction management service to project development of multi-million dollar projects, employing thousands of workers. Many projects are, furthermore, joint venture operations requiring diversified "cooperative management" skills. In essence, MK has to manage other company's employees, let alone their own. The "umbrella" training programs that Corporate Training administers are within three major areas of common need: management skills training, professional (job) development training and project management training.

Morrison-Knudsen has a unique approach to management skills training through a program

called the Individual Management Development Program or IMDP. The emphasis, it should be noted, is on the individual, whereas project management training is on the individual and team effort.

In late 1979, the newly formed Corporate Training section under Corporate Personnel was chartered to develop, implement and validate a management training program to meet the common needs of the corporation. Several existing management training programs offered by vendors were reviewed with the intent of using an existing program and tailoring it to MK needs, circumstances and management

else was one to measure the effectiveness of a program without the objective?

- It had to be "how-to oriented." In other words, it had to impart skills that could be practiced, rather than strictly theories or matrices that left the manager to his or her imagination.

- The program had to be highly interactive, providing opportunity for the individual to practice what he or she had learned, and for the trainer to judge if learning had occurred—particularly on the job. Performance contracting would be especially useful in this regard.

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## A unique approach to management skills training is working at Morrison-Knudsen...

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population. While such a program could have started from scratch, it was more cost-effective to not "reinvent the wheel," as long as a reasonably shaped wheel could be found and retooled to our needs. The following criteria were applied in reviewing existing vendor supplied programs:

- It had to be needs assessment-based. Thus, the assessment process and hopefully an instrument used by that vendor could be modified, as needed, to conduct our own internal needs assessment.

- It had to employ performance-task objectives. How

- It had to employ behavior modeling. What's correct and as importantly, what's incorrect modeling?

- It had to employ media commensurate with the task being learned and practiced. Too many existing programs tie into a medium (i.e., video) for the sake of delivery, rather than for the sake of what is best for learning the particular objectives at hand.

- It should employ job aids—helpful reminders (usually in print form) that could be taken back to the job and used to remind one of what to do, i.e., in a discussion on work improvement,

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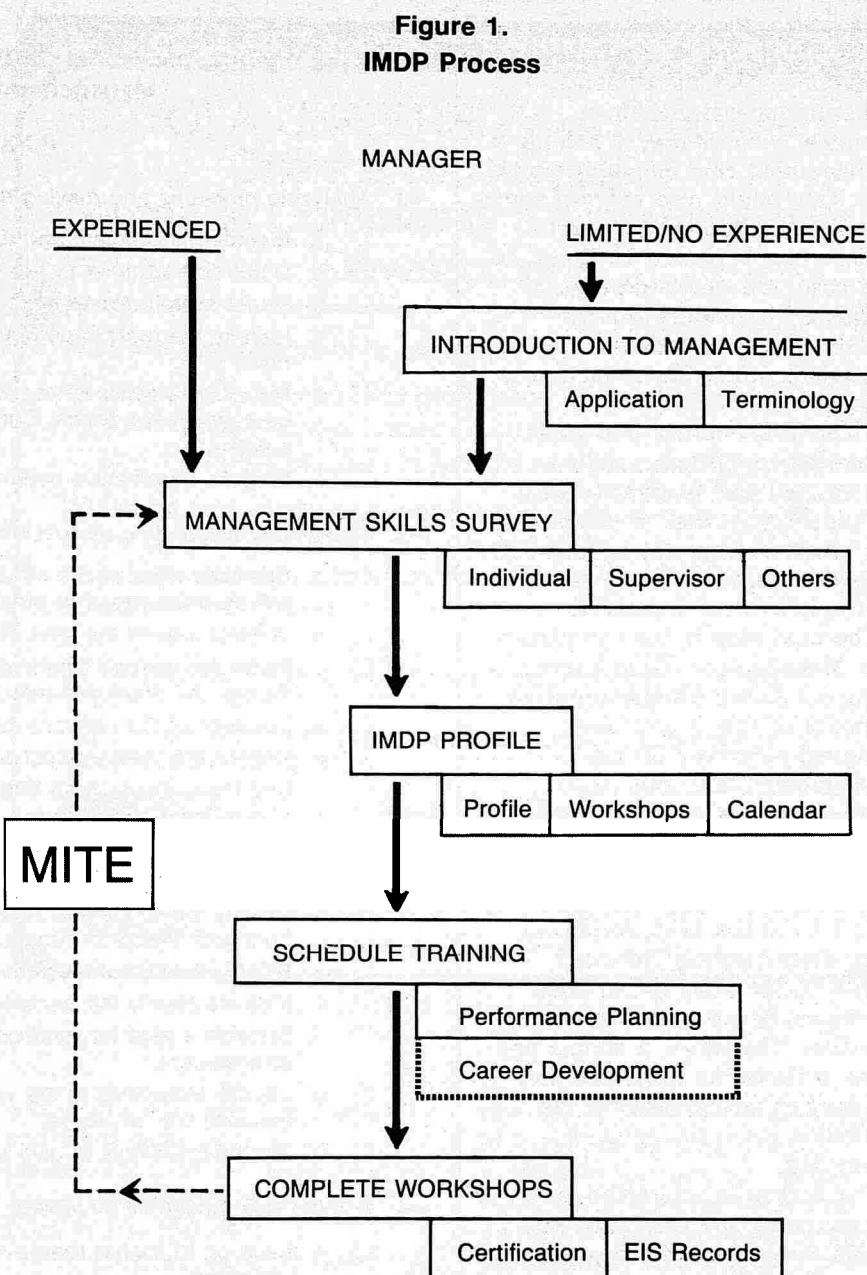
what kinds of questions should the manager ask.

- Consideration had to be given to unit size of instruction, since employees can generally only be made available for training in short increments—i.e., four-hour time segments would be the ideal for MK's environment. This also would allow relevant practice before returning to learn additional skills.

Fortunately, among the several vendor programs available, one incorporated nearly all of these criteria. Of these criteria, the first one, a needs assessment instrument, was the most difficult to find in an existing management program—let alone any program. Moreover, the nice thing about the needs assessment instrument was that it did not necessarily lock MK into the instructional modules available from that particular vendor. In other words, we could take and try the best of what they offered and select other vendor modules or units and/or develop our own—which we have done.

### Needs assessment

Essentially, MK initiated its management training effort by selecting (on the basis of a needs assessment study) and implementing 11 modules of the vendor supplied programs and validating the success of these individual modules. Modifications were made in content, approach, examples and other needs. It was soon evident, however, that this program was being implemented in what might be described as a "shotgun" approach. The individual manager or would-be-manager would enter and complete all the available modules. This kind of approach is less efficient (and to some degree less effective) than desirable. How to individualize the program, or at a minimum, how to individualize for a group of managers with common needs, became the next logical step to achieve. Our long-term goal in individualizing is a learner-controlled-instruction (LCI) version of the program. In between the group "shotgun" ap-



proach and LCI lies what we call the Individual Management Development Program (IMDP). The foundation for the IMDP (as well as the LCI program) is the needs assessment instrument.

### The program

Figure 1 illustrates the steps involved in the IMDP process. We begin with a gross assumption: are you an experienced manager (supervisor) or a manager with limited or no experience? While this is a decision

for the individual to make, perhaps in concert with his or her immediate supervisor, it is related primarily to the accuracy of completing the needs assessment instrument. In other words, would the individual understand the terminology of the assessment instrument?

Understanding terminology is critical to identifying what one knows and what one does not know. This does not present as much difficulty as one might surmise. For the individual with no



experience, the answer is obvious. He or she does not begin with the survey instrument. In general, our criteria for "limited" experience, is holding a management role for one year or less. One might also judge if someone has 15 years of experience or one year repeated 15 times. In any case, the "limited/no experience" individual, enters IMDP by way of a 12-hour workshop titled, "Introduction to Management."

This workshop has two goals: immediate application skills to get started and familiarity with terminology so that in completing the needs assessment instrument, a more accurate self-assessment by the individual is possible.

The next step is the completion of a Management Skills Survey. Figure 2 shows a representative segment of this instrument, designed to survey 30 key management functions (with related tasks to each function). This assessment provides a simple "yes" or "no" to each task under each function. No scale (i.e., 1 to 5) has been employed, since distinguishing between points on the scale (other than extremes) becomes difficult in application. Therefore, a simple yes or no reflects the extremes and can be further assessed in the workshop when the group is assembled.

The survey is completed, at a minimum, by the individual and by his or her immediate supervisor. The individual or immediate supervisor can also request that additional surveys be completed by subordinates, other upper management familiar on a working basis with the individual, other managers in a matrix management system or co-workers at the same management level. The results are compiled into the IMDP profile.

The profile is a folder containing pertinent information on the individual, along with a listing of the major management functions surveyed. Those that the individual, along with others, have indicated a "need" to learn about are marked on the profile. For each function, an available inter-

**Figure 2.**  
**Management Skills Survey**

### **FUNCTIONS**

#### **—1. Analyzing problems and making decisions:**

- ☐ a. Identify the problem and describe it clearly.
- ☐ b. Determine whether or not the problem is worth spending time on.
- ☐ c. Use a systematic approach to collect information.
- ☐ d. Identify the most important characteristics that a solution should have.
- ☐ e. Generate a series of possible solutions and select the one which best meets the needs. Consider the characteristics of each possible solution.
- ☐ f. Prepare an effective action plan for the solution you select.

#### **—2. Conducting fact-finding discussions:**

- ☐ a. State the need or the information in such a way that the employee will be encouraged to provide what you need.
- ☐ b. Indicate clearly the kind of information you want.
- ☐ c. Probe for relevant information (both positive and negative) even though the employee may be reluctant to speak.
- ☐ d. Uncover all the relevant data without creating hostility or distrust.
- ☐ e. Record the facts you collect.
- ☐ f. End the discussion so that the employee feels he or she has made a significant contribution.

#### **—3. Motivating:**

- ☐ a. Identify situations that result from motivational problems rather than from lack of skill or organizational support.
- ☐ b. Identify causes of motivational problems.
- ☐ c. Indicate clearly the behaviors that you want to motivate.
- ☐ d. Develop a plan for removing de-motivating elements from the work environment.
- ☐ e. Identify incentives in the work environment which can be used to motivate the employee.
- ☐ f. Demonstrate how to give effective motivational feedback.

#### **—4. Dealing with emotional situations:**

- ☐ a. Face up to, rather than avoid or be intimidated by, emotional situations.
- ☐ b. Recognize and avoid using "emotional blackmail" as a way of controlling others.
- ☐ c. Demonstrate respect for the feelings of others.
- ☐ d. Handle emotional situations by calming.
- ☐ e. "Defuse" the emotions of others so that the real cause of problems can be uncovered.
- ☐ f. Avoid responses that escalate emotional behavior.

nal workshop is listed. Where an internal workshop is not available, external vendor supplied workshops that have been evaluated by Corporate Training are listed. A calendar of when these workshops will be implemented is included and

periodically updated. This survey process helps Corporate Training identify what modules of training need to be added internally and within these, what tasks need emphasis.

Scheduling training, as the next step, is accomplished as a

regular part of the employee performance planning cycle. While the individual, with supervisor approval, is free to schedule his or her own training, incorporating scheduling with employee performance planning allows integration of other employee needs with the IMDP. The IMDP serves to help the supervisor and individual accomplish a more thorough job performance planning by identifying needs. Similar surveys are being developed by Corporate Training in the Professional Development Skills and Project Management areas to further aid in performance planning needs. As also noted in Figure 1 (by the dash lines), integration with career development will be planned in the near term.

On completion of individual workshops and the IMDP program, the individual receives certification and employee records are kept on employment history, experience and training/education. A recycling (although we have not reached that point yet) function of using the Management Skills Survey and/or an alternate MITE (Managing Individual and Team Effectiveness) program to update management training needs is shown in Figure 1. This is in recognition of not only skills that perhaps were not learned, but skills not practiced immediately after learning and needing to be refreshed.

### Looking to the future

As currently structured, the IMDP is basically an attempt to individualize training on a group basis. But Morrison-Knudsen is a diversified company and most of its managers operate in the field. How will they receive management training unless they circulate at some point through the home office? Two mechanisms are planned to meet this need:

- Periodically, group-led workshops will be taken to geographic areas so that job site individuals can attend these sessions as easily as vendor-supplied workshops or those at the home office. The survey instrument

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will tell us how many managers and what modules need implementation where. Implementation at larger project site locations is also planned.

- A learner-controlled instruction version of the program is currently being planned for development and implementation. The reader is referred to other sources (Langdon, 1973, Wydra, 1980) for details on the design of LCI.

IMDP currently incorporates two vital features that lend themselves to direct use in an LCI design for management training. These include the needs assessment instrument in the form of the Management Skills Survey and the fact that management modules are performance objective-based. To these components, we will need to specify existing and/or develop self-learning instructional materials

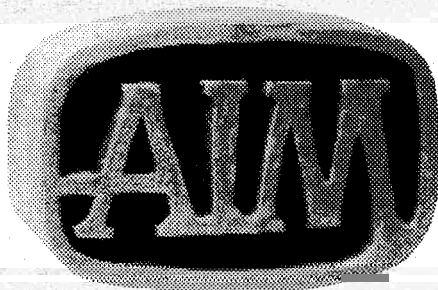
(for which we have the beginning of a modest library), develop evaluation instruments commensurate with the objectives and identify human resources within the company that can fit into the system administratively, as well as serving as resources for learning.

We plan to add an alternate version of "post-testing" to the Management Skills Survey once the individual has completed the program. This is indicated in Figure 1 on the left side of the flow diagram by the acronym MITE, meaning Managing Individual and Team Effectiveness. This program was developed by Xerox, but as we see it, MK will use it slightly differently. We intend to use it for two purposes:

- As a post-testing mechanism. MITE incorporates a wider range of surveying to identify management training needs.



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- It concentrates more heavily on a team effort than the IMDP and therefore adds a dimension necessary to achieve a more rounded manager working with others at a similar or higher level. This will be particularly worthwhile to implement within departments or sections of the company where the "team" effort is practiced on a regular basis. In some sense, MITE will become our graduate program in the total process of management training and development.

In conclusion, IMDP is meeting our management training needs effectively and efficiently. Its principal advantages lie in:

- Assessing and providing management training to the individual needs of the practicing or entry-level manager;
- Involving the management trainee's supervisor in the identification and planning process of training;

tification and planning process of training;

- Fitting into an on-going employee-performance planning system and career-development program;
- Providing a continuous mechanism for an ongoing identification of management training needs beyond initial training;
- Providing cost-effective management training where needed through an analysis of surveys;
- Determining areas of emphasis for a group attending a training session;
- Assisting in identifying developmental needs for internal training in areas of high need, while relying on external resources that are best met for the few that need it on a cost effective basis;
- Demonstrating MK's interest

and dedication in developing its existing managers and would-be managers on an individual and team basis.

## Bibliography

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