

Book Reviews

BEHAVIOR OF INDUSTRIAL WORK GROUPS

by Leonard R. Sayles

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

182 pages - \$4.75

Reviewed by GEORGE A. HOY, Jr.

Editor, Industrial Management

Factory Management & Maintenance

McGraw-Hill Publishing Co.

This book reports the author's research into the behavior of 300 work groups in thirty varied plants. He finds that groups of workers have consistent, characteristic ways of finding fault with their work situation. And groups have different ways of expressing their dissatisfactions.

To set the scene for analysis, work groups were classified into four types as follows:

1. Apathetic—Groups not likely to challenge management or union decisions.
2. Erratic—These groups were easily inflamed, inconsistent, often had a single, strong leader. They were active in union organization.
3. Strategic—Highly individual important jobs, better than the average in the plant gave these workers a lever for strong pressure for their wants.
4. Conservative—These groups were made up of highly skilled men. They were unusually stable in their grievance behavior.

Here are some of the things that influence the grievance behavior of work groups:

1. *Position of the group on the promotional ladder.* More grievances come

from semi-skilled groups than from skilled or unskilled workers.

2. *Size of the work group.* Large groups more active than smaller groups.

3. *Homogeneity.* If most members of a work group do approximately the same job, their demands and grievances are apt to be vigorous. This factor is influenced by group size, with larger homogenous groups the most vigorous in pressing their demands.

4. *Essentialness to production.* Job shop work groups are less active than line production groups. Reason is that the line group has the ability to force their issues by stalling production other than their own.

5. *Work standards involving judgment.* Groups with this characteristic were more active than others.

Other possible reasons for different grievance behavior were studied, but only minor variation was found.

The book gives valuable insight into the way workers behave, based on the kind of work they do and the kind of group they work with. Trainers, labor relations men, and manufacturing engineers should find much of value in it. The fallacy of the popular notion that the supervisor can be held responsible for the character of his crew is made obvious.

Sayles deserves criticism with his praise. His conclusions are fuzzy, hard to identify. And his writing is a trial. It is scholarly, but very hard to read.

THE APPRAISAL INTERVIEW:

Objectives, Methods and Skills
by Norman R. F. Maier

John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
440 Fourth Ave., New York 16
246 pp. - \$5.95

Reviewed by J. A. LITTERER
Department of Management
University of Illinois

Included as a part of most executive development programs is some sort of an evaluation of the performance of individual executives which is usually followed by an interview in which the subordinate is told by his superior the results of the evaluation and what can be done for future improvement. Many people who work with such programs readily nominate this interview as one of the toughest, most frequently detested parts of executive development work. Dr. Maier tackles this difficult interview in his latest book and presents an excellent analysis of the objectives of the interview, the ways it can be conducted and the strengths and weaknesses of several approaches.

Three approaches are considered. The "Tell and Sell," where the superior *tells* about the valuation and tries to *sell* its acceptance and utilization. The second is "Tell and Listen," where the superior tells of the evaluation and then listens to the subordinate's response with the idea of getting a clear picture of how the subordinate has reacted and understood the evaluation. In the third approach, "Problem Solving," the superior invites the subordinate to discuss how he feels about his past performance and what they can do to improve it. Here

the initiative is given to the subordinate with the superior acting as a "helper" in the discussion.

Maier shows, by both analysis and actual findings, that as one goes from the "Tell and Sell" to the "Problem Solving" technique the relationship between the two becomes more relaxed, both parties are less defensive, the superior talks less and the subordinate more, and the problem of motivating the subordinate to use the proposed plan for improvement is reduced since he has largely developed this himself.

Maier presents a strong argument for adopting the problem solving approach. However, to do this, many programs would have to modify the objectives they want the appraisal interview to accomplish, for it is not designed to accomplish all the things of the other methods. This is, in fact, one of the reasons for its success. Instead of trying to do many things at the same time it focuses only on one, the developing of the subordinate, and does this well.

This technique is one which requires a considerable amount of skill. Considering that most executives have spent their lives in positions where they *tell* people things, it is perhaps expecting too much that they will automatically be able to carry out this non-directive technique. Maier's book is long on the reasons *why* this approach should be adopted, but short on *how* to do it, and *how* to train people in using it. This is an unfortunate weakness in an otherwise excellent book.

This book should be a *must* for anyone connected with executive development or training.

YOU AND MANAGEMENT

Daniel R. Davies and
Robert T. Livingston
Columbia University

Harper & Brothers

Reviewed by MERLE E. ROBERTS

IE and Personnel Manager
Bell Sound Division

Thompson Ramo Wooldridge Inc.

This excellent aid to self evaluation and development leads the reader to a close inward look at himself, while sizing up the functions and responsibilities

of organization managers. Although it does not match the more extensive "handbooks" of management development required by the training director it is recommended for those who are entering this area of training for the first time.

A desk copy to use as a "loaner" may prove helpful to those responsible for counseling and following up on appraisals and management development programs. From its first chapter "A Private Chat About You" to the more scholarly "Paths to Managerial Perspective" it follows an easily read pattern of

(Continued on following page)

**SOMETHING WONDERFUL WILL HAPPEN TO YOU
NEXT MAY 4-8!**

**That is — if you attend the 15th Annual ASTD Conference
at Hotel Sheraton-Cadillac, Detroit.**

You will experience:

- **THRILLING PROGRAMS**
- **AUTOMATION IN ACTION**
- **UNFORGETTABLE SIGHTS**

**FOR THE CONQUEST OF INNER SPACE —
COME TO DETROIT NEXT MAY**