

# BEWARE, THE BANDWAGON

*has the behavioral science movement resulted in a parade of fads in management development?*

Someone once said that of all of the scientists who ever lived, 95 per cent are alive today. Now, I don't know how true this is, but if you replaced scientist with *behavioral scientist*, I think you might be closer to the truth. For in less than 50 years the field of behavioral science has fairly exploded from its modest classroom and research beginnings to its present multi-faceted fields of interest. All of the disciplines that make up the behavioral science field, psychology, anthropology, sociology, socioeconomics and political science, to mention a few, have experienced a tremendous increase in growth during these years.

Perhaps the one single most important causal factor for this rapid growth has been industry's increasing concern with "people problems." The behavioral sciences seek to predict how most people are *likely* to behave under a given set of circumstances as opposed to certainty. As the size and complexity of industry has increased, it has become increasingly important for managers to understand why people behave as they do. This has been necessary in order to create environmental conditions which are most likely to produce certain kinds of behavior. Translated into business terms this usually means greater productivity.

## THE BEHAVIORAL BEGINNING

It is generally agreed that it was Elton Mayo's studies in the Hawthorne plant of Western Electric in 1927 that first sparked industry's interest in the behavioral sciences. This was the beginning of the relationship of industry and the behavioral sciences as we know it today.

These studies were among the first to illustrate the effect of group pressures and norms of individual behavior within the groups. Management today is familiar with the effect of group pressures on the individual. However, in the 1920's these findings changed many long accepted ideas about the economic motivation of workers.

This was significant not only because it revealed the importance of group dy-

namics, it also lent an aura of respectability to such studies because of Mayo's reputation. Up until the Hawthorne studies many of the behavioral science disciplines felt it "unscientific" to study groups because they did not have personalities in and of themselves that could be studied in operational terms. Even anthropologists, whose main studies were about social groups, were interested in groups only so far as how the individual acted *toward* his group.

This auspicious beginning of the alliance of industry and the behavioral sciences was soon to receive a serious setback in the form of the great depression of the 30's. During the period industry felt no compelling reason to worry about group interaction or worker motivation. The wolf was at most workers' doors and as Maslow was to point out later, the basic needs have to be taken care of first.

## MANAGEMENT BY BANDWAGON

Two things happened that caused industry to seek again the help of the behavioral scientists. First, the country began to emerge from the morass of the depression. Second, America became the "Arsenal of Defense." Quite suddenly industry found itself in the unusual position of seeking out workers and striving to make production goals. In the thinking of the times the question was asked, "How do you increase production?" Back came the answer, "By raising morale!" So over the next few years a number of morale raising approaches were tried. Some companies tried one, some tried a little of each — management by bandwagon was born.

One concept that enjoyed a great deal of popularity was the human relations approach. Supervisors were to call their subordinates by their first names and a "friendly" atmosphere was to prevail. Fringe benefits were increased and the workers were told by their supervisors that they were all part of "one big happy family."

There was more to the human relations concept and much of it was not intrins-

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cally bad. What was bad was the insincere manipulative approach that took a naive simplistic view of man and what motivates him. By equating high morale with high productivity, many a manager ended up with happy unproductive workers.

### BETTER COMMUNICATIONS

Another attempt by industry to motivate workers which is part of the human relations approach was through better communications. In attempting to communicate with workers, supervisory schools on how to communicate sprung up. Loud speakers were installed so announcements could be made without taking the workers away from their work. A rash of company newspapers, magazines, newsletters and pamphlets flooded the market. This made the local printers happy but did little to motivate the workers.

Job participation was another attempt to motivate the worker. The Herzberg story of the production supervisor telling an assembly line worker, whose job it is to tighten 10,000 nuts a day on the left rear wheels of the cars as they pass by, that he is building a Chevrolet is a classic of the manipulative approach. Making a worker *feel* he is part of the company, or making him *feel* he is recognized does not motivate him.

### TRIED KITA?

These are just a few of the early programs that attempted to answer some of industry's "people problems." Behavioral science as we know it has taken something from each. It is interested in good relations between people as in the human relations approach. Good communication between people as in the important tool, but not an end in itself. And, of course, participation, *real* participation, can add immeasurably to worker satisfaction and motivation.

Since the earlier attempts to explain how to manage and motivate people, the concepts, programs and indeed the very goals of behavioral science have

changed. But still concepts, or application of concepts, are more micro than macro. For example, by visualizing the totality of a worker as a brilliant cut diamond with its 64 facets, we have a feeling for the problem. All too often a concept which deals with but one facet is presented as, or implemented as, the whole diamond. This one part of the whole becomes *the* answer. Again let me refer to Herzberg. If you want *the* answer to motivation, try KITA, if you dare.

### BANDWAGON PARADE

It's easy to become a victim of management by bandwagon. Just look at the studies and research projects that have come down the pike in less than two decades.

Theory X and Theory Y  
Hierarchy of Needs  
Motivation/Hygiene  
Mix Model  
Linking Pin  
Grid  
T Groups  
MBO  
Job Enrichment  
Organizational Development

These are just the *major* theories, and I may have missed a few. None of these approaches have ever claimed to be *the* answer to motivation. However, all too often a company will take a pinch of Theory X and Theory Y, a dab of Motivation/Hygiene, throw in a jigger of MBO, shake well, apply and then wonder why nothing happens.

### NOW OD?

The last approach on our list, and the latest, is organizational development. This is a broad approach to the whole motivational problem and as a single approach possibly could best stand on its own feet. However, without defining what you want, where you want to go, it too could be another fad, another experience in management by bandwagon.

Young as the alliance between industry and the behavioral sciences is, important

definition of problems and goals with the resultant improper selection of programs has often resulted in management disenchantment. Too many tries and too many failures and the company turns sour on all behavioral scientists and their "weirdo" programs and returns to management by contingency.

So be careful in what you select for your company. If you can carefully define your problems and your goals the answer will probably jump right out at you. But with ill-defined goals, or to do something just because it is "the thing" to do — well, never mind. There is always plenty of room on the bandwagon.



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