

CHARLES MARTELL

Administration: Which Way—Traditional Practice or Modern Theory?

Recent technological and social developments are forcing many administrators to reassess the effectiveness of traditional managerial practices. Attempts to increase effectiveness by utilizing modern theories of management have frequently ended in failure. This article maintains that features inherent in the traditional, "mechanistic" organization hamper the creation of truly flexible and adaptive organizations. If this is the case, it is crucial that administrators learn to recognize and cope with these hindrances. This article focuses on three specific areas: (1) leadership; (2) group processes; and (3) organizational structure.

Where communication is perception, information is logic. As such, information is purely formal and has no meaning. It is impersonal rather than personal.¹

WHEN THE BOOK WAS PREEMINENT and unchallenged, the function of the library in society was relatively clear. Events unfolded rather slowly and the library profession was allowed the luxury of adapting gradually. As an organization, the library conformed to the traditional mold. It was, in essence, machine-like. "A properly designed administrative machine has correctly assigned positions and levels of authority and definite rules exist for ensuring the correctness."² This mechanistic approach tended to ignore differences between individual and organizational goals.

The book is no longer preeminent nor unchallenged. Technological developments have helped to create an environment wherein "acceleration, diver-

sity and novelty" are the rule, and gradual adaptation has become inadequate as a generalized response to change. As Lipetz suggests, the entire fabric of traditional library practices and procedures borders on the state of chaos.³

Outmoded procedures are but one small part of a far more general, far more complex malaise, i.e., the library's apparent inability to respond to the demands of an external reality. The library is not unique. Technological and societal developments have placed many organizations in a similar position.

For years studies in the management and behavioral sciences have dealt with the problem of rapid change and its effect on the viability of organizations. "The accelerative thrust forces time into a new perspective in our lives. It compels us to make and break our relationships with the environment at a faster and faster tempo."⁴ Both individuals and organizations are caught in this seemingly endless spiral.

An administrator who can successfully integrate the often conflicting demands of employer and employee with-

Mr. Martell is a graduate student in the Graduate School of Library Science, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

in a responsive organizational structure has come a long way toward insuring the survival of that institution, whether it be in business, government, or education. However, there are many elements inherent in traditional management practice which militate against such responsiveness. In the following discussion, traditional practice and theory will be contrasted with certain aspects of modern management and behavioral theories; however, modern theories are frequently unsuccessful in practice because they are largely incompatible with traditional forms of organization and managerial styles. Awareness of this dichotomy should help the administrator gain a new perspective into the opportunities and shortcomings existing in his own organization and in his own leadership style.

This article will focus on three specific areas: (1) leadership; (2) group processes; and (3) organizational structure.

LEADERSHIP

Traditional managerial philosophy bases leadership on the principles of control, direction, and planning. The organization itself is structured to facilitate this arrangement. Within this structure, the manager manipulates his employee by administering rewards and punishments in a systematic way. Ac-

cording to McGregor (see list of Suggested Readings which follows this article) natural human tendencies are considered antithetical to regular work requirements or, at best, are merely ignored. Managerial tasks are constructed so as to counteract those internal forces which are not directly supportive of the goals of the organization.⁵

Throughout the twentieth century, management theory has incorporated certain findings derived from the behavioral sciences. The current emphasis upon the individual as a social being rather than as an isolated phenomenon has refined management theory; the once prominent view that saw man as a mechanical entity has changed. Management practice, however, has failed to keep in step with these developments. When defined within the context of the following chart, management practice is primarily "custodial" in nature. While most research today is being conducted at the "supportive" and "collegial" levels, managers have progressed only slightly from the "custodial" toward the "supportive" area. A manager with an affinity toward a supportive style would frequently find himself handicapped by practical organizational constraints. Unfortunately, some of these so-called practical constraints result from managerial perceptions poorly

FOUR MODELS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

	<u>AUTOCRATIC</u>	<u>CUSTODIAL</u>	<u>SUPPORTIVE</u>	<u>COLLEGIAL</u>
Depends on:	Power	Economic resources	Leadership	Mutual contributions
Managerial orientation:	Authority	Material rewards	Support	Integration & teamwork
Employee orientation:	Obedience	Security	Performance	Responsibility
Employee psychological result:	Personal dependency	Organizational dependency	Participation	Self-discipline
Employee needs met:	Subsistence	Maintenance	High-order	Self-realization
Performance result:	Minimum	Passive cooperation	Awakened drives	Enthusiasm
Morale measure:	Compliance	Satisfaction	Motivation	Commitment to task & team

Adapted from Keith Davis, *Human Relations of Work: The Dynamics of Organizational Behavior* (3d ed., New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967), p.480. Used with permission of McGraw-Hill Book Company.

attuned to contemporary environmental and societal developments.

The popularity of labels is not restricted to the area of management practice. They have also been used to characterize a particular manager's style of leadership. McGregor lists three categories of managerial styles: "hard, soft, and firm but fair." These categories are directly related to the Blake Managerial Grid, which is based on a manager's perception of his own style. The Grid theory suggests that there are two major variables affecting management style: (1) concern for production, and (2) concern for people. Concern for production and people are the two coordinates on the Managerial Grid. As each coordinate ranges in intensity from 1 to 9, it is possible to have eighty-one different managerial styles. For example, the team theory of management (maximum concern for production and people) would be (9,9) on the Grid.

Managerial styles are frequently unsuccessful because they ignore the significance of intrinsic rewards and punishments. Intrinsic rewards are "inherent in the activity itself: the reward is the achievement of the goal. Intrinsic rewards cannot be directly controlled externally, although characteristics of the environment can enhance or limit the individual's opportunities to obtain them. Thus, achievements of knowledge or skill, of autonomy, of self-respect, of solutions to problems, are examples."⁶ No one style of leadership is appropriate to all situations, extrinsic or intrinsic reward systems notwithstanding. Each manager is unique and this will always be reflected in his style. Nevertheless, rapid change creates conditions in which the manager will have a greater likelihood of success if he uses an "optimizing" rather than a "controlling" leadership style.⁷

How, then, can managers change their style of leadership?

I have come to believe that the presentation of facts and theories, utilizing conventional intellectual methods of training and education, may often be ineffective when the subject matter involved is related to the perceptions of managers with respect to their own ideas and to the nature of man. The most fruitful methods are those which utilize direct experience of a not too threatening kind, a safe environment for the open examination of issues, opportunities to test new behaviors, and positive reinforcement of such changes as do occur.⁸

Summary

In traditional management theory, an administrator exercises his leadership role by means of control and direction whereby important psychological needs of the employee are ignored. This often results in a mechanistic form of organization. Thus, leadership is ill equipped to cope with rapid change, since it must rely on prearranged signals rather than on the adaptive ability of the employee. Concern for production is the primary concern of the administrator in a mechanistic organization. Contemporary management and behavioral theories treat the organization as a biological entity. Administrators using an optimizing leadership style are more attuned to modern theory, which both accepts and seeks to encourage employee motivation.

GROUP PROCESSES

The tempo of contemporary existence is forcing management to consider ways of involving the employee in the attainment of organizational goals. Slater and Bennis state in their article entitled "Democracy Is Inevitable" that "democracy becomes a functional necessity whenever a social system is competing for survival under conditions of chronic change," but that for "adaptability to change conditions, for rapid acceptance of a new idea, for flexibility in dealing with novel problems" and for "generally high morale and loyalty, the more

egalitarian or decentralized type seems to work better."⁹ Coordination of individual and organizational goals is one important step in the creation of an "egalitarian" organization. The mechanistic approach to management is ill suited for the task since it assumes that all but a few workers are unmotivated. Seen from this point of view, the principle of involvement is farcical. Argyris believes that "the old forms are going to be more effective for the routine, noninnovative activity that requires little, if any, internal commitment by the participant."¹⁰

The problem of unmotivated workers is based on a misconception which is common to most managers:

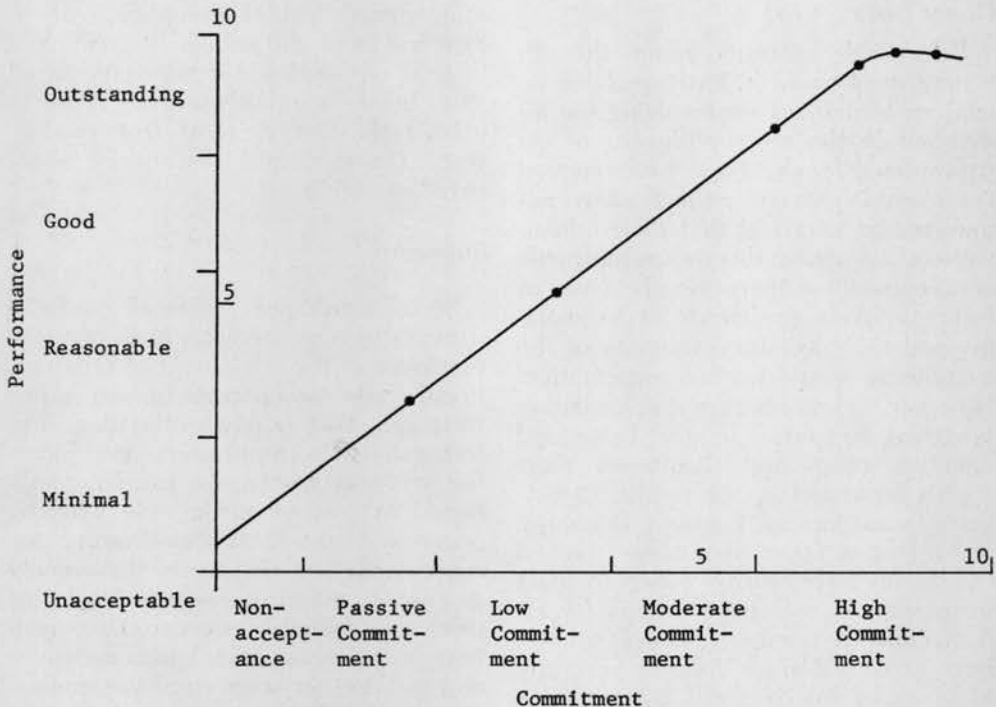
How do you motivate people? . . . You don't. Man is by nature motivated. He is an organic system, not a mechanical one. . . . This is the sense in which the behavior-

al scientist distinguishes between an organic and a purely mechanical theory of nature.¹¹

Involvement will tend to release motivational forces inhibited by traditional management practice. It is only after the employee recognizes that his actions will lead to a degree of self-fulfillment that he will feel a sense of commitment toward the achievement of organizational goals. There is every reason to believe that this will have a positive effect on performance (see chart below).

Participation in the decisions which affect his work situation is one means of obtaining individual commitment. Peter Drucker in his comments about the communication process and its traditional influence on motivation shows why participation is a prerequisite for commitment:

For centuries we have attempted communication downward. This, however, cannot



Relation of Commitment to Performance^o

^o From *The Professional Manager* by Douglas McGregor. Ed. by Caroline McGregor and Warren G. Bennis (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967). Fig. 3, p.128. Used with permission of McGraw-Hill Book Company.

work, no matter how hard and how intelligently we try. It cannot work, first because it focuses on what we want to say. It assumes in other words that the utterer communicates. But we know that all he does is utter. Communication is the act of the recipient . . . all one can communicate downward are commands, that is, prearranged signals. One cannot communicate downward anything connected with understanding let alone motivation.¹² The start of communications in organizations must be to get the intended recipient himself to try to communicate.¹³

Group processes through dynamic interaction have the potential to bring the individual employee into the communication process. In spite of overwhelming evidence to support the notion of group participation, however, difficulties are frequently encountered in actual work day situations.

Interpersonal Barriers to Effective Group Participation

Behavioral scientists romp through management councils. Extemporizing on modern techniques for involving the individual in the accomplishment of organizational goals, they have created considerable interest among many administrators who feel that their organizations have shown themselves incapable of adequately anticipating the form of future markets, the effects of technology, and the specialized interests of the community served by that organization. However, administrators implementing programs suggested by the behavioral scientists often find themselves thoroughly frustrated by the results. Participatory management, T-groups, D-groups, and a host of other laboratory-approved techniques have usually failed to meet management's subjective criteria for effectiveness. A number of recent studies have explained these failures primarily in terms of interpersonal barriers, and organizational structure.

At the upper levels the formal design tends

to require executives who need to manage an intended rational world, to direct, control, reward and penalize others, and to suppress their own and others' emotionality. Executives with these needs and skills tend to be ineffective in creating and maintaining effective interpersonal relationships; they fear emotionality and are almost completely unaware of ways to obtain employee commitment that is internal and genuine. This results in upper level systems that have more conformity, mistrust, antagonism, defensiveness and closedness than individuality, trust, concern and openness.¹⁴

In the group process there must be some balance between emotionality and the demand for effective participation. Unfortunately, many individuals exhibit little patience with emotionality. This is especially true of administrators who are accountable for group productivity. Groups which do not immediately conform to expectations are categorized as unsuccessful and relegated to the administrators' mental dumpheap, or in rare instances disbanded. A great deal of time and patience is necessary on all sides before a group can even begin to exhibit the first signs of true productivity. Openness and trust cannot be secured overnight.

Summary

Social conditions are forcing administrators to consider ways to involve the employee in the attainment of organizational goals. Group participation is one technique that is frequently used. Unfortunately, administrators participating in these groups are usually conditioned to a mechanistic style whereby openness, trust, and emotionality are suppressed. The absence of these qualities causes group participation to be no more than tolerably effective. Democratic styles of organization which recognize and seek to encourage employee motivation are inevitable, in spite of the fact that most organizations still adhere to more traditional forms.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

Organizations are created for the purpose of exploiting a perceived need. People are grouped into various formal patterns or relationships in order to provide the most effective ordering of resources. According to traditional organization theory, this is best achieved: when workers are closely supervised, when workers and/or their superiors report to and take directions from one and only one person, and when those individuals with authority are held accountable for their actions and decisions. Such a structure lends support to a managerial philosophy which views the worker as unmotivated and mechanical.

The traditional structure is best suited to those organizations in which it is possible for the top administrator to be effectively knowledgeable about most aspects of his industry, where markets are relatively stable, and where the impact of technology is inconsequential. Frequent communication between different levels in such organizations is not essential, since it is assumed that change occurs slowly and habitual patterns of response are well ingrained.

During the 1950s, behavioral scientists offered management a systematic body of research findings which many felt would cure the ills affecting most organizations. Group participation would, if applied correctly, encourage employee involvement, motivation, and commitment. This in turn would enable individuals to cope with a rapidly changing organizational environment, and hopefully would stimulate more creativity and innovation. When group participation methods faltered, numerous studies were undertaken to determine why. The study of organizational structure and design has provided some useful insights.

What the behavioral scientists overlooked was the complex nature of

an organization's internal environment. Many administrators initiating participatory management functioned within settings or structures which were inherently authoritarian. The organization was mechanistic, and it supported similar attitudes among its administrators. Accordingly, when participatory management was undertaken, the primary emphasis was still on changing technology rather than on individual needs. Besides leading to many failures, this subjugation of human considerations to those of the organization demonstrated a continuing misconception of man's nature.

The external environment has finally pushed itself right into the boardrooms. Management has been witnessing wholesale disenchantment with the traditional structure of its institutions. Consequently, the study of organizational structure and design has become a popular pastime. Unique structures have been developed to answer specific problems. Likert's "linking pin" structure, the "Matrix" concept, and the "ad hoc-racy" or transitional task group are the best known. They feature free flowing systems of communication and more effective utilization of specialized knowledge. Unfortunately, they all share one basic weakness: relative inflexibility. They are merely limited types of response to a particular set of circumstances.

Lawrence and Lorsch in *Organization and Environment* present a situational approach to organizational design called the "contingency" theory of organization.¹⁵ "Their general point is that there is no 'one best way' to organize, but that different companies in different industries require different kinds of organizational structures at different times."¹⁶

The process of designing an organizational structure appropriate to a particular situation is extremely difficult. The number of variables to be examined, coupled with the complexity of the

unit, precludes the creation of a "best way" structure. Three important variables to consider are: external environment, internal environment, and interaction between the two. On the surface this listing appears somewhat ludicrous. Yet how can one ever hope to reduce the size of these variables to manageable proportions? Obviously, one cannot cope with their full dimensions. The favored approach is to attempt an isolation of the most important factors. The state of the national economy certainly has an observable influence on the budgetary constraints of many organizations. Technology alone can have a distinct impact on the structure of viable institutions. Leadership styles can be determined, and clearcut suppositions based on these styles enumerated.

Since the variables affecting an organization are in constant flux, many planners are trying to create individualized, adaptive structures. Some are even ignoring formal charts—a radical event to say the least. The degree of flux is a crucial element in planning for change. Some industries are relatively static. Others are in a state of dynamic growth. It is important to recognize the vital factors. An industry is often static merely because perception of its potential has been inhibited. The railroad is a classic example of an industry which failed to develop as a viable medium of transportation because it chose to ignore the potential for expansion into other areas of transportation. An organization must be able to release the creative energies of its personnel. A sick, static industry, unable to free itself from outmoded practices, stifles the very energies which can lead to revitalization.

Studies in the design and structure of organizations have yet to make a significant impact on managerial practice. This is due in part to the traditional gap between practice and theory. More important is the magnitude of change required for an organization to restruc-

ture itself. Every function, division, and human relationship is affected. For this reason, widespread restructuring is unusual. It is more common to find administrators fiddling with their formal, organizational charts. To many, minimizing loss appears safer than maximizing profit.

Management is not riding a calm sea. As affirmed earlier, several developments are underway which seriously threaten traditional institutions. The aura of rapid change and acceleration has stimulated an entire bevy of prophets. The "knowledge worker" introduces difficulties of another kind. ". . . Knowledge has become the central 'factor of production' in an advanced developed economy . . . to make knowledge productive will bring about changes in job structure, careers and organizations as drastic as those which resulted in the factory from the application of Scientific Management to manual operations."¹⁷ Employees classified as knowledge workers are likely to be influenced by technical competence "rather than on the vagaries of personal whim or prerogatives of power."¹⁸ Inevitably this will lead to a direct confrontation with traditional structural approaches. A letter written in 1750 by the Earl of Chesterfield for his son contained a truth which lasted more than two hundred years: "Knowledge may give weight, but accomplishments give lustre, and many more people see than weigh." If knowledge has indeed become the central factor of production, however, then those who neglect to revise the Earl's sentiment will gain little wisdom and less lustre.

Summary

Knowledge as a central factor of production creates difficulties for the typical mechanistic organization. It is possible that technical competence based on knowledge will become more valued and respected than personal power and authority. Where effective group partici-

SUGGESTED READINGS

pation is hampered by organizational structure, changes in that structure will be called for. Anticipatory measures may become a matter of survival. Administrators must try to obtain a clear perception of their industry in order to develop organizational goals and time orientations appropriate to their environment. New approaches to organizational structure stress the need for adaptability and flexibility.

CONCLUSIONS?

There are none. One should not tidy up perceptions. Hopefully they remain amorphous, and competently so. And yet . . . a few months ago I read an article in *Newsweek*, "New Architecture: Building for Man" by Douglas Davis. It gave me a new awareness: a mental connector between the substance of this discussion and the field of architecture . . . and further. Perceptions of structure, whether of organizations, buildings, or people, must be perceptions of life. Idealistic? But of course!

"Behind the new architecture is no one design concept or social ideology but the basic idea that structures must be part of the social organism that includes people and what they do as individuals, families and communities. . . . The new architects see that promise in the beauty of flexible forms that inspire, enhance and adjust to the changing energies of human life."¹⁹

Argyris, Chris. "Today's Problems with Tomorrow's Organization," *Journal of Management Studies* (Feb. 1967), p.31-55.

Interpersonal barriers to effective management.

Bennis, Warren G., ed. *American Bureaucracy*. New York: Aldine Publishing, 1970.

Innovation, change, and need for new patterns of organization.

Drucker, Peter. *Age of Discontinuity*. New York: Harper & Row, 1969.

A new age, new organizations—essential.

Lawrence, Paul R., and Lorsch, Jay W. *Organization and Environment: Managing Differentiation and Integration*. Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1967.

A comparative study of several organizations—get your feet wet.

McGregor, Douglas. *The Professional Manager*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1969.

Finely balanced presentation—a must.

Mockler, Robert J. "Situational Theory of Management," *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1971), p.146-55.

Generalized update of latest developments.

"What's New?—In Personnel Theory and Practice," reported by the 1970 ASPA Professional Information Committee, *Personnel Administrator* (Jan.-Feb. 1971), p.9-16.

Discusses shift in values—useful bibliography.

REFERENCES

1. Peter Drucker, *Technology, Management & Society* (New York: Harper & Row, 1970), p.12.
2. S. Krupp, *Patterns in Organization Analysis: A Critical Examination* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961), p.80.
3. Ben-Ami Lipetz, "A View of the Special Library of the Future," *Drexel Library Quarterly* (Oct. 1969), p.195-208.
4. Alvin Toffler, "New York Faces Future Shock," *New York* (27 July 1970), p.22.
5. Douglas McGregor, *The Professional Man-*

ager; ed. by Caroline McGregor and Warren G. Bennis (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1967).

6. *Ibid.*, p.7.

7. Thomas J. Sergiovanni and others, "Toward a Particularistic Approach to Leadership Style: Some Findings," *American Educational Research Journal* (Jan. 1969), p.62-79.

8. McGregor, *Professional Manager*, p.67.

9. Philip E. Slater and Warren G. Bennis, "Democracy Is Inevitable," *Harvard Busi-*

- ness Review* (March-April 1964), p.53.
10. Chris Argyris, "Today's Problems with Tomorrow's Organization," *Journal of Management Studies* (Feb. 1967), p.49.
 11. McGregor, *Professional Manager*, p.10-11.
 12. Drucker, *Technology*, p.15-16.
 13. *Ibid.*, p.21.
 14. Chris Argyris, "Management Information Systems: The Challenge to Rationality and Emotionality," *Management Science* (Feb. 1971), p.B276.
 15. Paul R. Lawrence and Jay W. Lorsch, in their landmark work, *Organization and Environment: Managing Differentiation and Integration* (Homewood, Ill.: Richard D. Irwin, Inc., 1967), analyzed four variables crucial to the success of any organization: (1) orientation toward particular goals, (2) time orientation, (3) interpersonal orientation, (4) formality of structure.
 16. Robert J. Mockler, "Situational Theory of Management," *Harvard Business Review* (May-June 1971), p.147. Mockler finds a parallel development (situational approach) in the behavioral area of management theory. "Attention has shifted from presenting universal leadership guidelines to studying such situational factors as operating requirements, individual and work-group needs, and the leadership style of individual supervisors." p.147-48.
 17. Peter Drucker, *Age of Discontinuity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1969), p.264.
 18. Slater and Bennis, "Democracy Is Inevitable," p.52.
 19. Douglas Davis, "New Architecture: Building for Man," *Newsweek* (19 April 1971), p.88.