

HOW MANAGERS MOTIVATE

THE IMPERATIVES
OF SUPERVISION

WILLIAM F. DOWLING
AND LEONARD R. SAYLES

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PREFACE

For decades, managers and business educators alike have agreed that the first-line supervisor is the most critical member of the management team. Here is where the action is; where operating work gets performed. While there is no disagreement on the importance of face-to-face supervision, the subject has not attracted many major textbook efforts. There are probably thousands of courses within companies and colleges that seek to train young men and women to become effective supervisors. Most of these consist of more or less adequate collections of speeches, readings, articles, and notes. Given the quantity of first-class behavioral research that has been done in this area and the need for its application both in the classroom and in organizations, we sought to write a new type of text on face-to-face supervision.

Our objectives in developing this text are threefold: first, to include a broad range of research findings from the leadership and organizational behavior field; second, to express these in ways that would appeal to the reader because the text would contain lively first-hand examples of supervisors on the "firing line"; and third, to emphasize the actual behavior and analytical thinking required of supervisors, not abstract "principles" and traditional "theories."

We have sought to give equal emphasis to behavior and systems. New or prospective managers don't get much help from being told what attitudes they should adopt and what their feelings *ought* to be. Sentiments are a result of what happens to you, not the cause. Therefore we have consistently dealt with styles and patterns of behavior—how supervisors handle themselves with subordinates, colleagues, their bosses, the union—in a wide variety of situations. The particular situation determines what particular strategy will prove successful, rather than a memorized formula good for all seasons.

As many of the newer studies have shown, it is just as reasonable to expect that high-performance work groups *cause* employee-oriented supervision, as the reverse. There is no one "best" style. Technology and the kinds of jobs being supervised will have a profound impact on what the supervisor can and should do. The supervisor's job is not neatly compartmentalized into planning and doing, controlling and directing, and the other traditional categories. Instead almost every action the supervisor takes has elements of all these embodied in it, and is most likely to cue a subordinate as to what is wanted when least expected to do so!

We recognize in each chapter that the supervisor and the department are always part of a total system that includes the operations closely related in some work flow, often a variety of staff departments (that both service and control), perhaps a union, a boss, and the larger

organization. For supervisors to play the "management game" successfully, the heart of the matter is to understand the importance of these interrelationships and dependencies. They must weigh carefully the impact of their actions and decisions on each one, as well as the role played by individuals they supervise and the group norms which have evolved. More often than not they must compromise and negotiate, accepting half a loaf, so to speak, rather than any ideal solution, if they hope to minimize conflict and provide a realistic accommodation between the goals they seek and the constraints that surround them.

Because our primary audience is managers-in-training, we have not sought to footnote any significant number of references. Footnotes, while useful and relevant to advanced work in the field, often discourage the new student or supervisor. We chose what we believe is a better road to impress the reader with the origins of the field. We have included brief selections from twelve scholars who have contributed greatly to modern management. By choosing people with broadly disparate backgrounds, we have sought to illustrate the breadth of knowledge and experience relevant to the job of the manager: psychology, sociology, anthropology, economics, engineering, to name the more important.

We are indebted to some great teachers, most of them friends and colleagues. While mentioning a few may do some injustice to the remainder, parsimony has been a guide in the preparation of the total work. Ms. Patricia Haskell, Professor George Strauss, Dr. Eliot Chapple, and the late Professors Robert McCloskey and Douglas McGregor have been among our instructors, although grades were given sparingly.

We especially want to thank the following teachers who read the manuscript and made many useful suggestions: B. A. Hindmarch, Purdue University-Calumet; Fred Luthans, University of Nebraska-Lincoln; Paul J. Wolff, Dundalk Community College; Margaret Fenn, University of Washington; Edward A. Nicholson, Wright State University; David H. Yoakley and Beve L. Sigal, Pensacola Junior College.

A book is the product of many hands. Mr. William J. Kane, our editor, provided us with a great deal of professional assistance, personal encouragement, and consistent good advice. Miss Penny Nathans skillfully clothed our "plot" and concepts in the continuing case which follows each chapter. Ms. Elizabeth Blair and Mr. William Wagel typed our many drafts conscientiously and with good cheer.

William F. Dowling

Leonard R. Sayles

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1

THE SYSTEMS APPROACH TO SUPERVISION

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

1 Comprehend why a manager's view of the world will differ from that of subordinates.

2 Understand why the usual simple "pyramidal" description of an organization is inadequate in defining the supervisor's position.

3 Understand the difference between a human "systems" world of organizational relationships and a traditional "compartmentalized" managerial job.

INTRODUCTION

To be a manager is a formidable task. Look at the difficulties neighbors, families, and friends have in maintaining good relationships. Yet an organization expects that a manager will get to know the people working for him or her well enough not only to maintain good day-to-day relationships, but also to obtain their cooperation in performing difficult or tedious job assignments. It takes a psychiatrist years to determine the motivations of one individual, yet the manager is expected to understand the motivations of an entire work group.

While all this makes management sound like one of the most demanding professions, behavioral scientists over the years have made discoveries about how people react to work and supervision that make the manager's job a lot more doable than it first appears. Put another way, while it may be very difficult to understand everything about another individual and to live closely with that individual without serious conflict, people are more predictable in how they respond to their jobs and their organizational roles. In short, marital relations are both more demanding and less predictable than work relations.

In this book we will try to integrate what is known about the way people behave in organizations with what managers have to do to fulfill their supervisory responsibilities. Fortunately, there is no inherent conflict between the two.

To be successful, the manager needs two kinds of knowledge: self-knowledge and knowledge of the organization.

SELF-KNOWLEDGE

Self-knowledge is the easiest. It basically can be summarized this way: Don't confuse the way you feel with the way other people feel. Most managers assume that the way they view the world around them is the way their subordinates see the world. Thus in trying to analyze what is going wrong, why they're having a problem with Archie or Ellen, managers jump to the mistaken conclusion that reality is the same for everyone. "After all, I'm being realistic," is what most managers tell themselves. They then decide how to solve the problem based on their own perceptions, ignoring or denying the possibility that there could be another equally reasonable set of perceptions. In fact, it is almost impossible for two people occupying different roles or positions to see the world the same way.

Here's a case that makes a good point about self-knowledge (and its limitations):

Bill Handler was really angry this time. He had just finished asking Al Pfizer to skip his lunch period today (and either eat a sandwich on the job or go out later) in order to finish a rush order that Bill's boss, Shirley Carr, had especially requested be finished by 2 P.M. The job involved reviewing a number of accident claims in one set of insurance files, and Bill knew this was "duck soup" for an old hand like Al. But Al had simply mumbled something about having to stop at the bank today and some other important personal errands and that, after working hard all morning, he really needed a lunch break—after all it was what all employees received.

Bill thought to himself how right he had been to turn down Al's request for promotion to senior claims analyst. At the time he had done it because of Al's poor attendance record even though he had to admit that Al was one of the sharpest analysts around. But promotion ought to reflect a sense of responsibility as well as ability, and once more Al had showed that he couldn't "cut it." "He just doesn't care about his reputation," thought Bill.

If only Bill could have seen the situation from Al's perspective. Al watched Bill take over as supervisor of the department two years before. At the time he was wary because Bill, unlike his predecessor, Joan Crispo, was standoffish. Bill didn't mingle much with the others in the department, never joked around, and didn't seem to like Al much at all. Al reasoned that Bill was probably concerned that someone as experienced as he was—Bill had never seen an insurance claim before taking the job—would resent a "green" supervisor. He became more sure of it after the incident with the bike took place.

Al got the flu, and it seemed to hang on for days. He got a call from Bill after his third day out asking if he couldn't come back soon because work was backing up. Al told him the doctor had said to take a full week. As luck would have it, on the fourth day he had gotten restless, and since the weather was so beautiful, he had ridden his son's bike down the street to a repair shop, all of 10 minutes away from his house, to get the gears fixed. Just as he was turning into the shop, he caught a glimpse of Bill driving by.

When he went back to work on the following Monday, he had tried to explain, but he knew that Bill didn't believe him. He found just how damaging a few weeks later when a promotion slot to senior claims analyst opened up, a job for which Al was certain he was well qualified. After he had indicated he wanted to be considered for the post, Bill told him that the job required a real sense of personal responsibility, and while Al was a long service employee, his overall record was only fair.

Everyone in the department told Al he had been discriminated against and he ought to fight it, to file a grievance, to see Ms. Carr, not take it lying down, and so on. But Al was too humiliated at being passed over. He only hoped that Bill wouldn't stay around too long. At least his friends in the department had stuck by him.

So when Bill asked him to give up lunch, Al saw red. Imagine what all the others would say about his doing favors for the boss who had kicked

him in the teeth. And what would they say about his going along with management's feeling that lunch time wasn't really theirs?

At this point there is little likelihood that Al will ever feel very motivated to go much beyond the minimum required by his job; this, in turn, will confirm Bill's view that Al is basically irresponsible, part of an antimanagement clique, and not qualified for promotion. In a sense, we're talking about a self-fulfilling prophecy. The way in which Al has treated Bill guarantees that Al, now and in the future, will live up to Bill's low expectations of him. The chapters to follow should help you acquire some knowledge and skills in how to avoid just this kind of destructive stalemate.

ORGANIZATION KNOWLEDGE

Supervisors need more knowledge than that derived by understanding that subordinates will view the world differently than their boss, that their own perceptions are not predictive of how others see the world. They also need to understand the special world of the organizations in which they perform their jobs.

Most managers start out with more false preconceptions than solid knowledge about the nature of modern organizations. They are deceived by the pyramids they have seen on formal organization charts, articles they have read, and the speeches on management they have heard. From these sources they draw conclusions such as:

- 1** It's the supervisor's job to get the work done through people over whom she has complete authority.
- 2** The authority of the supervisor is equal to her responsibilities. The supervisor controls all the resources she needs to perform the tasks for which she is held accountable by higher management.
- 3** The only person to whom the supervisor is accountable is the next manager in the chain of command, her boss.

Reality is far different. Subordinates have a good deal of power with which to counter the authority of the supervisor. They may have unions or other strong groups that can challenge almost any manager's orders as being unfair or even illegal. There are many assignments for which the manager must rely on the motivation and goodwill of the subordinate either because the work is complicated, is done out of sight, or lends itself to silent sabotage, delays, and deceptions. Work loads are often ambiguous, and adequate productivity frequently depends on the

supervisor's use of persuasion and leadership skills and not on simply telling people what they must do.

The same distinction between myth and reality holds for the second statement. Almost no supervisors have authority equal to their responsibilities. Managers are dependent on outside groups to provide supplies, repairs, and data in the right quantities and at the right time. All these outsiders typically report to *other* managers with different goals and different perceptions from those of the supervisors.

Furthermore, many of these outsiders who have an impact on the manager's job also have some control or power not unlike that exercised by another boss. In other words, the modern manager is accountable to a variety of other managers (in addition to the next level boss) for such things as quality (to the quality control manager), quantity of output (to the production control manager), size of salary increases or disciplinary penalties imposed (to the personnel manager), for costs (to the accounting manager), and so on.

ORGANIZATIONS AS HUMAN SYSTEMS

Thus organizations function as much laterally—by negotiations and persuasions taking place between managers and their subordinates and between one set of managers and another—as they do hierarchically—by orders passing down the line. The manager gets things done by participating in a variety of interactions that involve subordinates, informal leaders, union representatives, staff departments, and service and support groups, as well as upper management.

The wide range of contacts required by the job means that managerial work does *not* follow neat timetables in which one task is finished before the next is begun. Instead, the manager operates by fits and starts. Just when he or she is planning to work out a problem involving a faulty invoice, an employee calls in sick and a replacement has to be secured from Personnel. In the meantime the invoice problem requires contacting the purchasing manager who is willing to authorize a change if Accounting has not yet approved payment for the bill.

But just as the manager is pursuing this down to what appears to be the finish line, another work problem requires intervention. In the midst of all this a work schedule change comes in the afternoon mail which involves some seemingly impossible levels of output, given the fact that next week three employees will be on vacation. On and on the day goes swiftly by with literally a hundred different calls, talks, meetings, and discussions with perhaps thirty different people.

If there is one constant in the manager's job, it is change—today won't be like tomorrow except that both will involve an extraordinary number of human contacts, mostly unscheduled, and with as many people outside the department as inside. This unpredictability means that managers must be alert to what their priorities should be today and not what they thought yesterday were going to be today's priorities. They must not get flustered because something new has to be started before something already started can be finished, and because other people don't appear to be acting rationally and fulfilling their commitments as the supervisor understands them to be.

After all, each individual in the system is also subject to pressures and demands from different sets of people and departments. As someone asks for more or gives them less, they will have to change what they can do, or are willing to do, in order to help you, the manager.

This highly interdependent world, in which individuals respond to different pressures and needs and thus don't always cooperate, is one in which the manager must learn to function, not by shouting orders and commands, but by understanding the system and how to function within it.

Thus the manager's job is unlike most other jobs. In other work you are used to having clear goals that you pursue pretty much on your own. In managerial work there will be many different goals, some of them conflicting with each other (for example, keeping subordinates satisfied, maintaining output, quality, servicing other departments, undertaking some longer-run change project, and so on). Moreover, the people you work with have different goals at different times. Some people are motivated to do first-class work, to get a sense of personal accomplishment; some want power and influence over their coworkers; others want to do the least amount of work possible and acquire as much leisure time as they can in the process; and still others merely want security and minimum risk. Managers need not only to understand themselves, as do all effective human beings, but also to understand the other people in the organization who affect their departments, including subordinates, superiors, and other supervisors.

There is always the danger that you will assume others are motivated the same way you are, that they share the same goals and the same values. Usually that's not true. There is a parallel danger involved in having a faulty model in your head that explains how things work in organizations. Most managers start with certain feelings about what causes what—often derived from past reading or experiences. They assume, for example, that offers of more money or threats of punishment are surefire ways to get more work, or they assume that work

groups always seek to hold back individual output. While everyone needs to have some understanding of the world—what causes what—in order to function, it's even more important that these "models" be relatively accurate.

Therefore, much of this book will deal with cause and effect. We hope to provide you with a more realistic view of what makes things happen in the world of organizations—both good things and bad. This includes dealing with the impact of how jobs are structured and performance is measured, and with the effect of different styles of leadership on productivity.

In summary, people in organizations, like people anywhere, do things because they think a particular course of action will advance or protect their own interests. The manager has to know how subordinates view the world around them—what they *expect* will happen if they ignore the supervisor or increase their output, what risks they are willing to take for what possible rewards or punishments as they are defined by subordinates. While supervisors may be tempted to impose their own calculations of likely benefits versus likely costs for doing something, it's a mistake to do so. It's the employee's way of viewing the world that must be understood.

The manager must keep in mind all these points of view and different goals, as well as how the organization works. That's a tall order, and it's a different kind of knowledge than purely technical knowledge because human feelings and human systems are involved. Managerial work then consists of a never-changing array of tasks and actions designed to keep a complex system on target.

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2

MOTIVATING PEOPLE: HOW TO MATCH HUMAN NEEDS TO JOB DEMANDS

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- 1** Determine the incentives available to any organization seeking to motivate employees.
- 2** Ascertain the existence of a hierarchy of incentives; some incentives motivate more than others.
- 3** See why any organization must supply a variety of incentives to meet the varying expectations of its work force.
- 4** Measure the supervisor's ability to dispense the incentives called for by the work situation.
- 5** Determine the extent to which money is a motivator.
- 6** Determine the extent to which the job itself defines and constrains incentives.
- 7** Define job enrichment and the conditions under which a job can be enriched.

You just set the work before the men and have them do it.
Henry Ford

When he was a teenager, Henry Ford's hobby was taking watches apart and then reassembling them. Legend has it that no watch he reassembled ever failed to tell the correct time. And, as everyone knows, he went on to perfect the assembly line and make a billion dollars. Henry Ford knew everything about machines—that's one side of the coin. The other side is suggested by the quotation above. He knew very little about what moves human beings. And it was his fantastically simplified view of human nature that more than anything else brought his company to the brink of bankruptcy in the latter days of his management. He really believed that all that was involved in the human side of management was to "set the work before the men and have them do it." If only it were that simple!

MAINSPRINGS OF WORK

Why do people work? Ask yourself the question. If there were a dozen persons answering it, we would guess that each one would list at least eight to ten reasons. And if each one were listing the reasons in order of their importance, no two lists would read exactly alike. People differ in the expectations they bring to their jobs and the satisfactions they derive from them. That's as you would anticipate.

The problem is that many jobs in both plants and offices are poor motivators as measured against any person's list of expectations and satisfactions. They offer a person a week's pay in return for services and very little more, for the nonmaterial rewards and satisfactions are slender.

This gap between the needs people bring to their jobs and the ability of their jobs to meet them is one of the central topics of this chapter. We will describe the principal needs that the majority of people bring to their jobs and the problems faced by higher management and supervision in trying to fulfill them.

WHY IS MOTIVATION IMPORTANT?

The problems of job expectation and satisfaction are important to even the most hard-boiled managers because, in the last analysis, management pays a heavy price for dissatisfying work—friction on the job, substandard output and quality, high turnover, absenteeism, and tardiness, to give only a partial list. The positive side of the motivation coin is of equal significance. The motivated worker is also the most productive worker, the worker who sometimes equals or excels any standards that bosses set or would contemplate setting.