

# ESSENTIALS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

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FOURTH  
EDITION



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STEPHEN P. ROBBINS

# ESSENTIALS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

Fourth Edition

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The Organizational Behavior Teaching Society*

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# PREFACE

Bigger isn't *always* better. Less *can* be more. A balanced textbook doesn't *have* to be 700 pages long. Welcome to the world of OB-Lite!

*Essentials of Organizational Behavior* is designed to provide a distinct alternative to the large selection of 700- or 800-page hardback texts available for courses in organizational behavior (OB). It is ideally suited to short courses, executive programs, and as a companion to experiential, skill development, case, or readings books. Users of past editions of this book tell me they've found it works well in all these ways.

As this book has evolved through its four editions, I have listened carefully to comments from users. I've made changes in each edition in order to fine-tune its content. My goal continues to be to capture the *essentials* of OB and leave out the less relevant topics. Some of the missing content relates to pedagogy. For instance, there are no end-of-chapter discussion questions, exercises, or cases. And though the findings in this book are based on hundreds of research studies, footnoting has been kept to a bare minimum. I footnote only the classic studies and those that support the more controversial findings. But cutting pedagogical aids and footnotes is a "no-brainer." The real challenge is choosing the proper topics and concepts, which is a lot harder than it looks. It's always easier to add material than to delete. Moreover, there is rarely unanimous agreement among users as to what should be added or cut. But we've surveyed many adopters, and many more have written me or pulled me aside at meetings to suggest ways I could improve this book. And I've responded. The result, I think, is a book that continues its tradition of reflecting a current perspective on the essential issues in organizational behavior.

So what's new in this fourth edition? I'm glad you asked! I've updated the content to reflect recent research and applications. There has been some judicious editing to streamline the presentation of many topics. Some nonessential issues have been deleted. And a number of issues have been added or significantly expanded. These include work force diversity, ethics, empowering employees, total quality management and continuous improvement, behavioral decision making, developing effective teams, sexual harassment, negotiation, computers and organization design, and stimulat-

ing innovation. And, for the first time, there's an Instructor's Manual with a Test Item File available for instructors.

Let me conclude by thanking all those who suggested improvements in this edition and, of course, all the people at Prentice Hall for continuing to support the concept of an essentials text.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Stephen P. Robbins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Stephen" and last name "Robbins" clearly legible.

Stephen P. Robbins  
*Del Mar, California*



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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

*After reading this chapter, you should be able to:*

1. Define organizational behavior (OB)
2. Identify the primary behavioral disciplines contributing to OB
3. Describe the three goals of OB
4. Explain why work force diversity has become an important issue to managers
5. Describe how improving organizational competitiveness has affected employees
6. Define the bimodal work force
7. Explain how managers and organizations are responding to the problem of employee ethical dilemmas

When I ask managers to describe their most frequent or troublesome problems, the answers I get tend to exhibit a common theme. The managers most often describe *people* problems. They talk about their bosses' poor communication skills, subordinates' lack of motivation, conflicts between employees in their department, overcoming employee resistance to a departmental reorganization, and similar concerns.

Since a manager's job is inherently one of working with and through other people—bosses, peers, and subordinates—to solve these problems, good “people skills” become a valuable, even an essential, asset. This book has been written to help managers, and potential managers, develop these people skills.

# ■ THE FIELD OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

The study of people at work is generally referred to as the study of organizational behavior. Let's begin, then, by defining the term *organizational behavior* and briefly reviewing its origins.

## *Definition*

*Organizational behavior (OB) is the systematic study of the actions and attitudes that people exhibit within organizations.* Let's look at the key parts of this definition.

Each of us regularly uses intuition or our "gut feelings" in trying to explain phenomena. For instance, a friend catches a cold and we're quick to remind him that he "didn't take his vitamins," "doesn't dress properly," or that "it happens every year when the seasons change." We're not really sure why he caught cold, but that doesn't stop us from offering our intuitive analysis. The field of OB seeks to replace intuitive explanations with systematic study; that is, the use of scientific evidence gathered under controlled conditions and measured and interpreted in a reasonably rigorous manner to attribute cause and effect. The objective, of course, is to draw more accurate conclusions. So the field of OB—its theories and conclusions—is based upon a large number of systematically designed research studies.

What does OB systematically study? Actions (or behaviors) and attitudes! But not *all* actions and attitudes. Three types of behavior have proven to be important determinants of employee performance: *productivity*, *absenteeism*, and *turnover*. The importance of productivity is obvious. Managers are clearly concerned with the quantity and quality of output that each employee generates. But absence and turnover—particularly excessively high rates—can adversely affect this output. In terms of absence, it's hard for an employee to be productive if he or she isn't at work. In addition, high rates of employee turnover increase costs and tend to place less experienced people into jobs.

OB is also concerned with employee *job satisfaction*, which is an attitude. The reasons managers should be concerned with their employees' job satisfaction are threefold. First, there may be a link between satisfaction and productivity. Second, satisfaction appears to be negatively related to absenteeism and turnover. Finally, it can be argued that managers have a humanistic responsibility to provide their employees with jobs that are challenging, intrinsically rewarding, and satisfying.

The last part of our OB definition that needs elaboration is the term *organization*. The fields of psychology and sociology are well-known disciplines that study behavior, but they do not concentrate solely on work-related issues. OB, in contrast, is specifically concerned with work-related behavior—and *that takes place in organizations*. An organization is a formal structure of planned coordination, involving two or more people, in order to achieve a common goal. It is characterized by authority relationships and some degree

of division of labor. So OB encompasses the behavior of people in such diverse organizations as manufacturing and service firms; schools; hospitals; churches; military units; charitable organizations; and local, state, and federal government agencies.

## ***Contributing Disciplines***

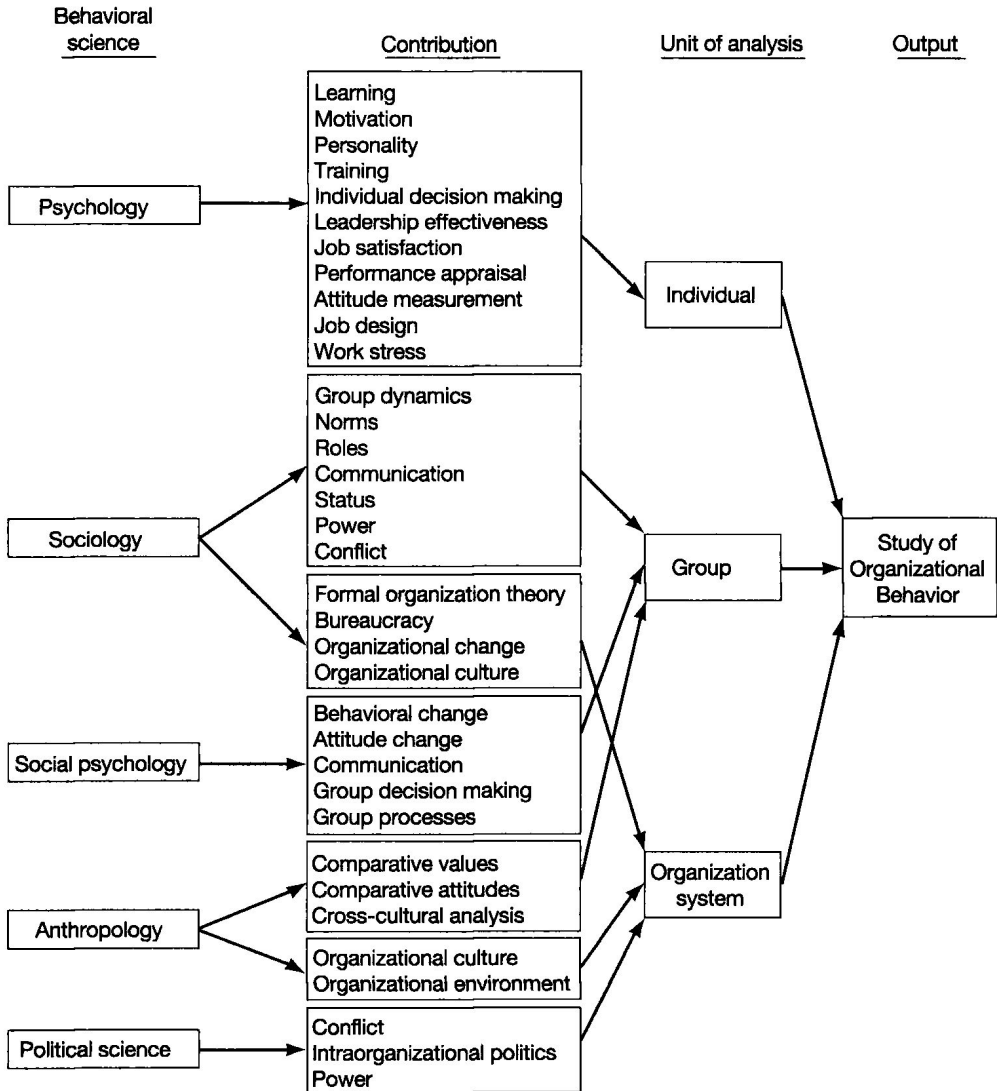
Organizational behavior is applied behavioral science, and as a result is built upon contributions from a number of behavioral disciplines. The predominant areas are psychology, sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and political science. As we shall learn, psychology's contributions have been mainly at the individual or micro level of analysis, while the latter disciplines have contributed to our understanding of macro concepts—group processes and organization. Exhibit 1–1 overviews the contributions made toward a distinct field of study: organizational behavior.

**Psychology.** Psychology is the science that seeks to measure, explain, and sometimes change the behavior of humans and other animals. Psychologists concern themselves with studying and attempting to understand *individual* behavior. Those who have contributed and continue to add to the knowledge of OB are learning theorists, personality theorists, counseling psychologists, and, most important, industrial and organizational psychologists.

Early industrial psychologists concerned themselves with problems of fatigue, boredom, and any other factor relevant to working conditions that could impede efficient work performance. More recently, their contributions have been expanded to include learning, perception, personality, individual decision making, training, leadership effectiveness, needs and motivational forces, job satisfaction, performance appraisals, attitude measurement, job design, and work stress.

**Sociology.** Whereas psychologists focus their attention on the individual, sociologists study the social system in which individuals fill their roles; that is, sociology studies people in relation to their fellow human beings. Sociologists have made their greatest contribution to OB through their study of group behavior in organizations, particularly formal and complex organizations. Areas within OB that have received valuable input from sociologists include group dynamics, organizational culture, formal organization theory and structure, bureaucracy, communications, status, power, and conflict.

**Social Psychology.** Social psychology is an area within psychology, blending concepts from both psychology and sociology. It focuses on the influence of people on one another. One of the major areas receiving considerable investigation by social psychologists has been *change*—how to implement it and how to reduce barriers to its acceptance. Additionally, we find social psychologists making significant contributions in measuring, understanding, and changing attitudes, communication patterns, the ways in which group activities can satisfy individual needs, and group decision-making processes.



**EXHIBIT 1-1** TOWARD AN OB DISCIPLINE

**Anthropology.** Anthropologists study societies to learn about human beings and their activities. Their work on cultures and environments, for instance, has helped us to understand differences in fundamental values, attitudes, and behavior between people in different countries and within different organizations. Much of our current understanding of organizational culture, organizational environments, and differences between national cultures is the result of the work of anthropologists or those using their methods.



**Political Science.** Although frequently overlooked, the contributions of political scientists are significant to the understanding of behavior in organizations. Political scientists study the behavior of individuals and groups within a political environment. Specific topics of concern to political scientists include structuring conflict, allocation of power, and how people manipulate power for individual self-interest.

## ■ GOALS OF ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

What does OB seek to do? We know it is concerned with developing people skills, but what precisely are its goals? The goals of OB are to help you to *explain, predict, and control* human behavior.

### *Explanation*

When we seek answers to *why* an individual or a group of individuals did something, we are pursuing the explanation objective. It is probably the least important of the three goals, from a management perspective, because it occurs after the fact. Yet if we are to understand a phenomenon, we must begin by trying to explain it. We can then use this understanding to determine a connective cause. For example, if a number of valued employees resign, we undoubtedly want to know why, in order to determine if it was something that could have been prevented. Obviously, employees quit their jobs for many reasons, but if the explanation for a high quit rate is inadequate pay or boring jobs, managers often can take actions that will correct this behavior in the future.

### *Prediction*

The goal of prediction focuses on future events. It seeks to determine what outcomes will result from a given action. When the manager of a small factory attempts to assess how employees will respond to the installation of new robotic equipment, that manager is engaging in a predictive exercise. Based on a knowledge of OB, the manager can predict certain behavioral responses to the change. Of course, there are a number of ways to implement a major change, so the manager is likely to assess employee responses to a number of change interventions. In this way, the manager can anticipate which approaches will generate the least degree of employee resistance and use that information in making his or her decision.

### *Control*

The most controversial goal is using OB knowledge to control behavior. When a manager asks, for instance: "What can I do to make Dave put out more effort on his job?" that manager is concerned with control.

Why is control controversial? A democratic society is built upon the concept of personal freedom. Therefore, the idea that one person should attempt to get others to behave in some premeditated way, when the subjects of that control may be unaware that their behavior is being manipulated, has been viewed in some circles as unethical and/or repugnant. That OB offers technologies that facilitate the control of people is a fact. Whether these technologies should be used in organizations becomes an ethical question. However, you should be aware that the control objective is frequently seen by managers as the most valuable contribution that OB makes toward their effectiveness on the job.

## ■ CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR OB: A MANAGERIAL PERSPECTIVE

The ability to explain, predict, and control organizational behavior has never been more important to managers. A quick look at a few of the dramatic changes now taking place in organizations supports this claim. For instance, more and more women and nonwhites are in the workplace, corporate restructuring and cost cutting are severing the bonds of loyalty that historically tied many employees to their employers, and global competition is requiring employees to become more flexible and to learn to cope with rapid change and innovation.

In short, there are currently a number of OB challenges and opportunities for managers. In this section, we briefly introduce a few of the more critical issues confronting managers for which OB offers solutions—or at least some meaningful insights toward solutions.

### ***Responding to Globalization***

Management is no longer constrained by national borders. Burger King is owned by a British firm and McDonald's sells hamburgers in Moscow. Exxon, a so-called American company, receives almost 75 percent of its revenues from sales outside the United States. Toyota makes cars in Kentucky; General Motors makes cars in Brazil; and Toyota and General Motors jointly own a plant that makes cars in California. These examples illustrate that the world has become a global market. In turn, managers have to become capable of working with people from different cultures.

Globalization affects a manager's "people skills" in at least two ways. First, you're increasingly likely to find yourself in a foreign assignment. You'll be transferred to your employer's operating division or subsidiary in another country. Once there, you'll have to manage a work force that is likely to be very different in needs, aspirations, and attitudes from the ones you were used to back home. Second, even in your own country, you're going to find yourself working with bosses, peers, and subordinates who were born and raised in different cultures. What motivates you may not motivate them. While your style of commu-