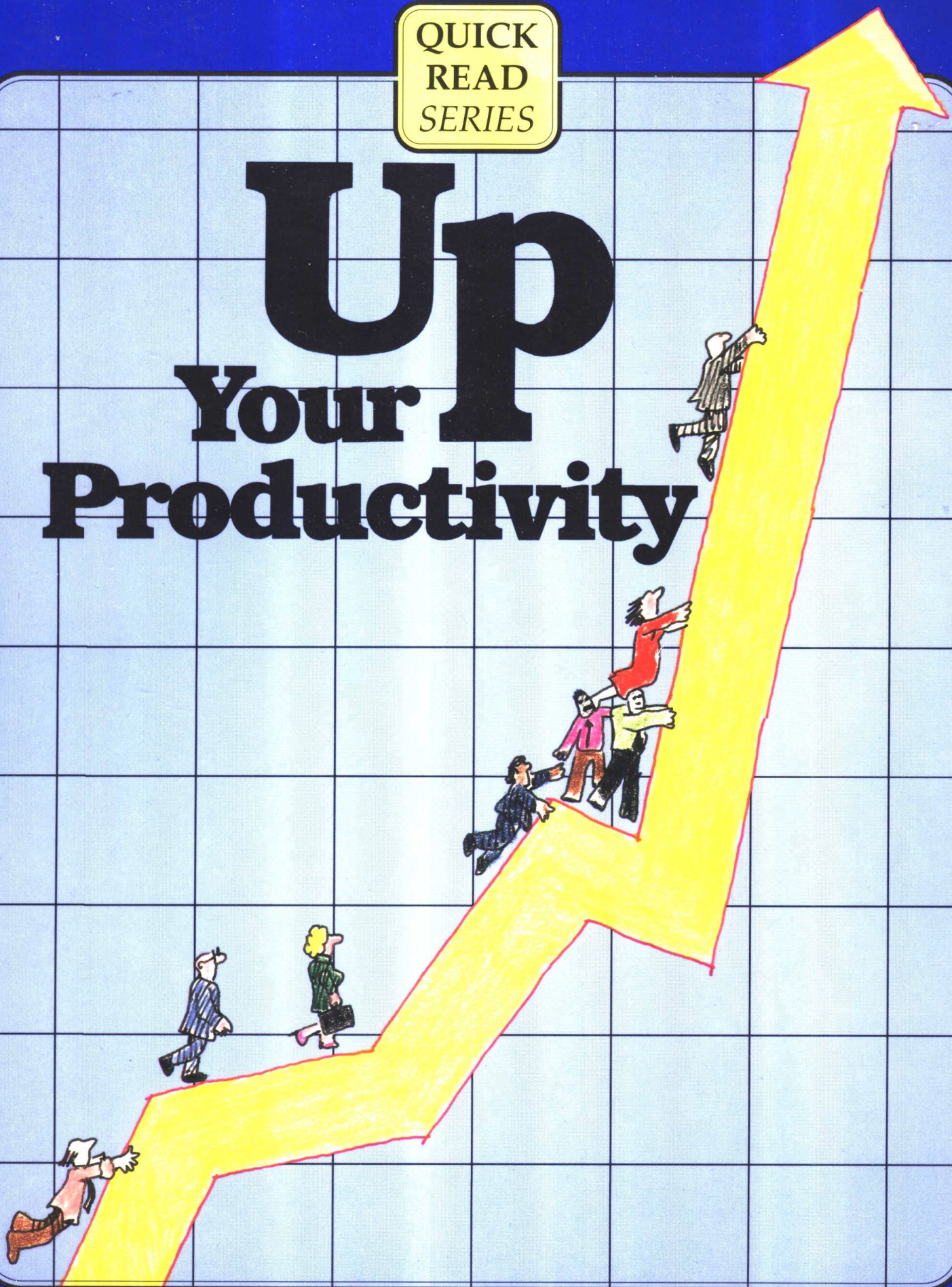


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Up Your Productivity



KURT HANKS

Up Your Productivity

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Warning

This is not a typical kind of business book. I think many business books are too big, too hard to read, and sometimes even boring. I decided to create a business book that's different, one made for easy reading, one that would be entertaining and fun to read even though its purpose is serious.

You don't even have to read it in the order in which the pages happen to be numbered. Most readers will, I believe, be able to recognize and choose the tips and insights that best serve their interests. For example, look back at the Contents to choose the topic you are most interested in, and turn to that topic first.

Although this book is meant to be fun, it is built on proven ideas and methods, and it reflects my own experiences. It will, I hope, help you make your business more productive.

KURT HANKS

Kurt Hanks

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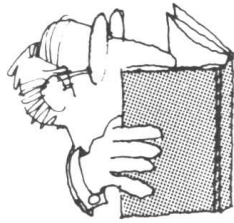
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This Book Can Help Your Productivity

This book can help the manager see solutions where before there was only uncertainty or blackness and despair.



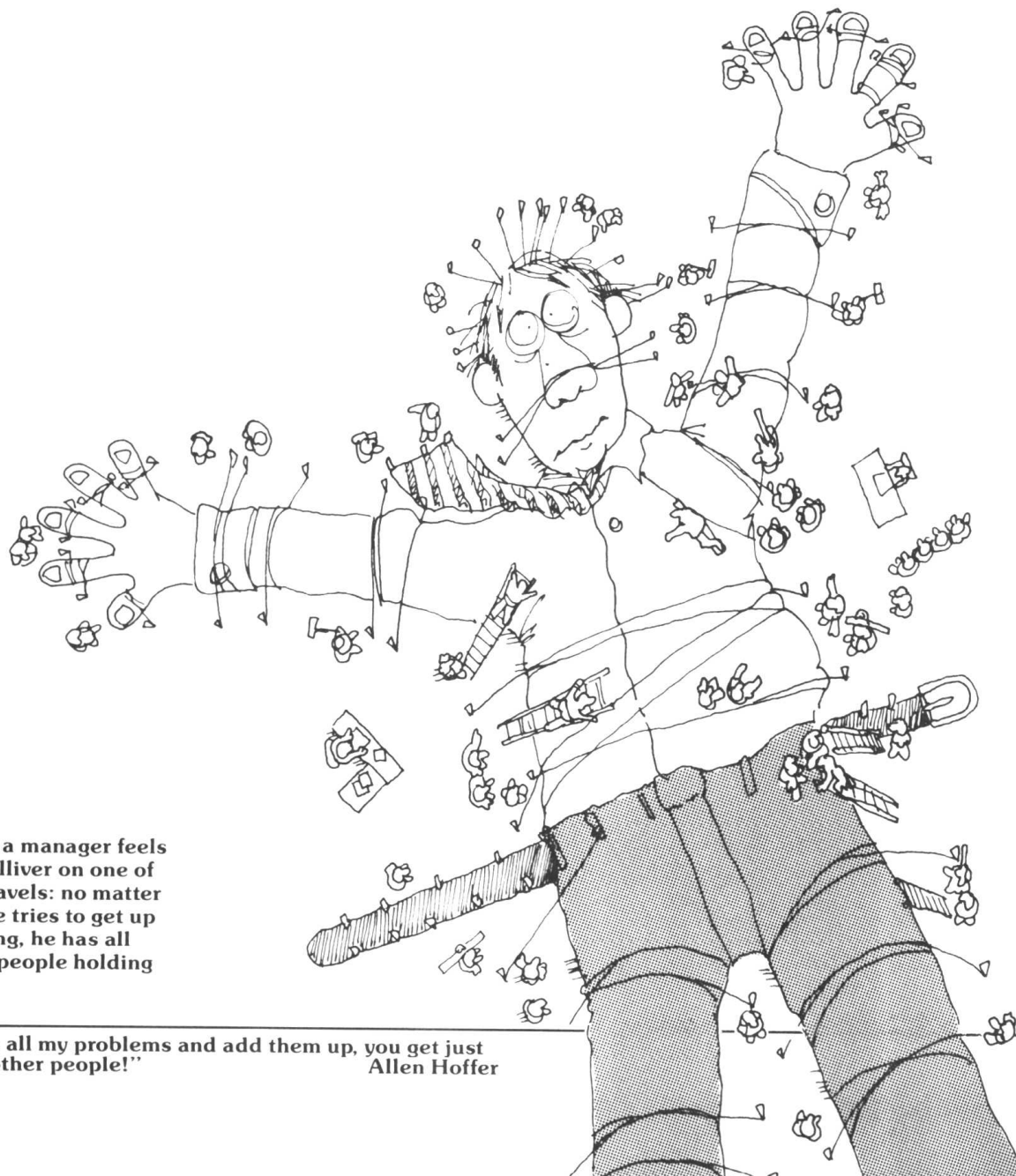
I won't lie to you. People hassles never end. As long as you are a manager, you'll have to deal with people problems. And you'll have to deal with time management and hiring the right employees. And with corporate competitors and new trends in the marketplace. That's the bad news.

But there is some good news: It's possible to deal with a lot of these problems in a

constructive, conclusive way. By using the ideas in this book, you can increase your sanity level and decrease your hassles.

And here's even better news: You don't have to use *all* the ideas in this book to win some real benefits. Pick the ones that will help you most now. You'll find that they work—and they can work immediately to increase the productivity of you and your employees.

Do you need help increasing productivity? Turn the page, and you'll find all kinds of useful ideas!



Sometimes a manager feels like he's Gulliver on one of his many travels: no matter how hard he tries to get up and get going, he has all these little people holding him down.

"If you take all my problems and add them up, you get just one thing: other people!"
Allen Hoffer

The People Hassle



The people hassle drastically decreases productivity.

A Never-ending Challenge

A manager's job is a daily succession of never-ending problems. Pressures close in from all sides. You're up to your nose in a river of problems—and you're about to go under!

What They Say

Whatever company a manager's in, his problems are the same. They fit together into one great big continual hassle. Here's what managers are saying:

“Workers never follow instructions. We go over it again and again, and just when I think they've finally got it, they go and do it another way.”



“I got as much water as I could.”

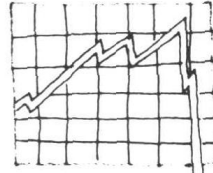


“Here's just what you asked for—the shortest memo possible.”

“The monthly production level is down. My boss is on my back to raise it. Top management is on my back because the approved methods aren't working. My workers are on my back because they're doing the best they can. And all I end up with is an aching back!”

“What, another irate customer? Just what are they doing down there in customer

relations—giving them obscene hand signals?”



“Ah hah! I caught you!”

“Those bureaucrats only look down long hollow tubes. Why can't they look at reality instead of at their stupid rules?”

“I call a meeting and openly ask for honest feedback. All the workers say everything's fine—then they go out and continue stabbing each other in the back.”



“You do great work!”



“You did an outstanding job!”

“I love board meetings! Everyone gives his two cents worth and then expects me to treat it like it's worth a million bucks.”

“They have a bunch of radios out there in the shop, and each one is playing a different tune. And the whole group of them dresses like rejects from a Hell's Angels gang.”

“Why do I have to keep saying the same thing over and over? It's in the policy manual. Can't they read?”

Higher levels of productivity are directly linked to people. By decreasing your people problems and increasing your use of these people, you'll invariably get better productivity.

A manager's problems are mainly people problems. In the end, if you can solve your problems with people, you'll be solving the biggest of all your problems.

The Manager Hassle

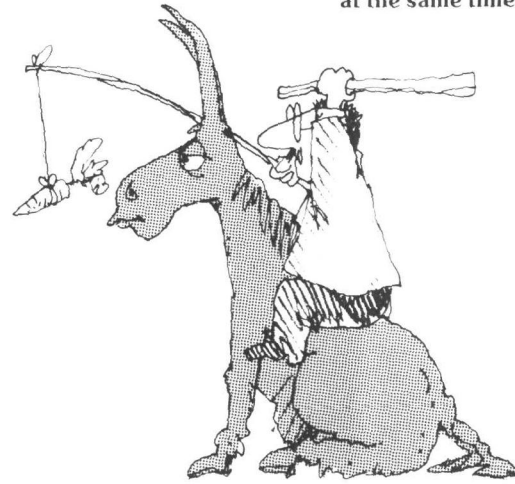
- Joan was a stutterer. It was a real problem for her, and she hated the embarrassment of being unable to express what she wanted to. When she got excited, she stuttered more and more until finally she choked up and couldn't talk at all. And the more she tried to control the problem, the worse it got.
- The human body has an autonomic system that runs breathing, heartbeat, and other vital functions. The autonomic functions are all unconscious—nobody can control them with his conscious brain (including, despite popular tradition, the yogis and swamis of India). If a person were given conscious control over his autonomic system, he'd die. It would be too much for him to keep track of.
- It was Henry's first time on a horse, and he was nervous. He grasped the reins firmly with his hands and pulled. "Giddyup," he said. The horse made a move to go forward, and Henry pulled back on the reins even more. His palms were sweating. "Giddyup," he said again. The bit pulled into the horse's mouth, and the horse could do nothing other than stand there and shake.

How are these three situations like the following manager's?

Jerry was the manager of a wholesale auto parts warehouse. He was afraid of losing control over his people, so he raised the level of control he exercised. He required a filled-out time log every day, written reports once a week, interviews once a month. But the more he tightened the screws on his people, the more they rebelled. And the more they rebelled, the more concerned he became, so he tightened the screws even more. It was a vicious cycle.

Productivity began to drop. Eventually it might have frozen up, and the warehouse might have had to close down.

Some managers try to entice their people—and drive them at the same time.



When control gets too tight in any situation, things will oscillate until finally they totally freeze up. When that happens, control is lost completely, and the controller is left with nothing to control.

If you set the tolerances on a thermostat too tightly, the heat will go on, off, on, off, and on in a very short sequence. The thermostat will chatter back and forth until it wears out, at which point it will freeze up. And then you'll have no control whatever over the heat in the room.

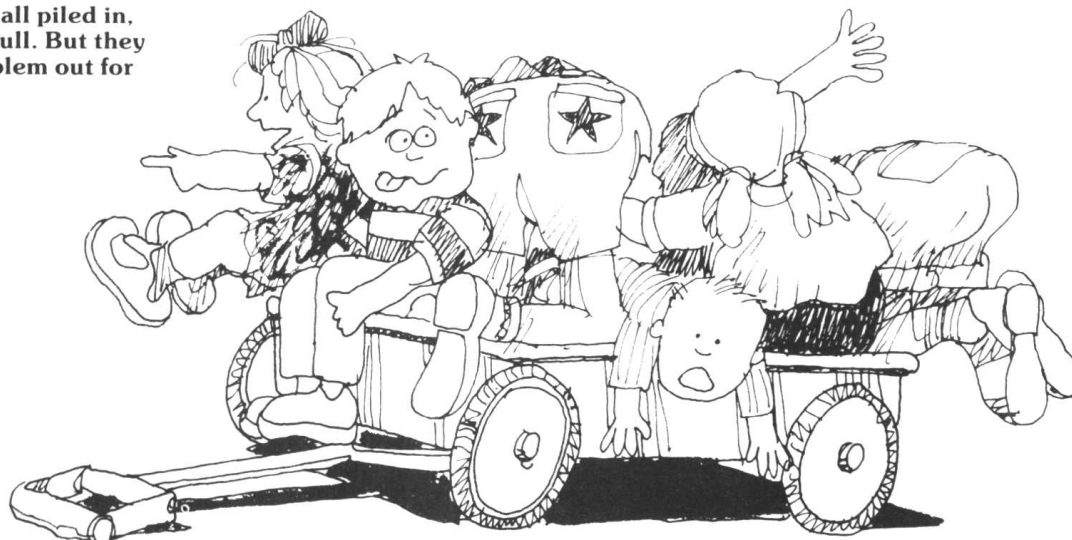
People are the same as thermostats. Try to control them too tightly, and you'll eventually lose control altogether.

The Little Red Wagon

Jeff bought a little red wagon for his seven kids and turned them loose to play with it. They laughed and shouted as they climbed in for a ride. Jeff watched from the window. Three kids on the wagon, five, seven. Seven little kids all squashed into a two-kid wagon, all waiting for a ride, with no one to pull them.

The laughter soon turned to tears. They began to argue. The older kids told the younger ones to get off and pull. "Come on! We can't have any fun."

At first the kids all piled in, with no one to pull. But they worked the problem out for themselves.



“We’re too little,” the younger kids responded at the tops of their voices.

Jeff was tempted to go out and supervise. Maybe the kids were too little to work out the problem. Maybe he should have bought them two wagons. But instead of controlling things from his adult perspective, he decided to watch for a while longer to see what the kids would do.

Before long the oldest kids were out of the wagon and were pulling the others down the street. The next trip, some of the older ones got to ride. They had divided the tasks equally among the seven, taking into consideration the age, size, and strength of each child. They spent the next several hours riding and pulling each other, and everyone got a fair chance to ride. Everyone had a great time.

But what do you suppose would have happened if daddy had gone out there with rules and control?

“Get Out of the Way!”

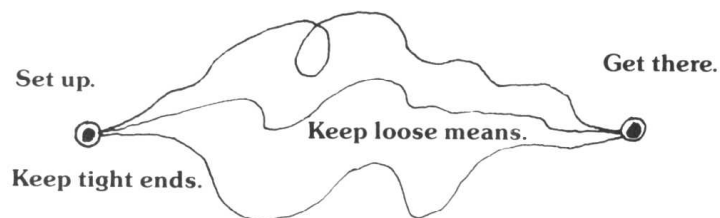
Bell Laboratories is one of the most successful research institutes in the world. Workers at the labs have won numerous Nobel Prizes for their technological innovation. The labs are constantly being studied as models of creative and productive excellence. The secret to their success? They refuse to exert too much control

over their people. Said Arno Penzias, research vice-president at Bell Labs:

“The way to run this place is to hire smart people and then get out of their way.”

How to Do It

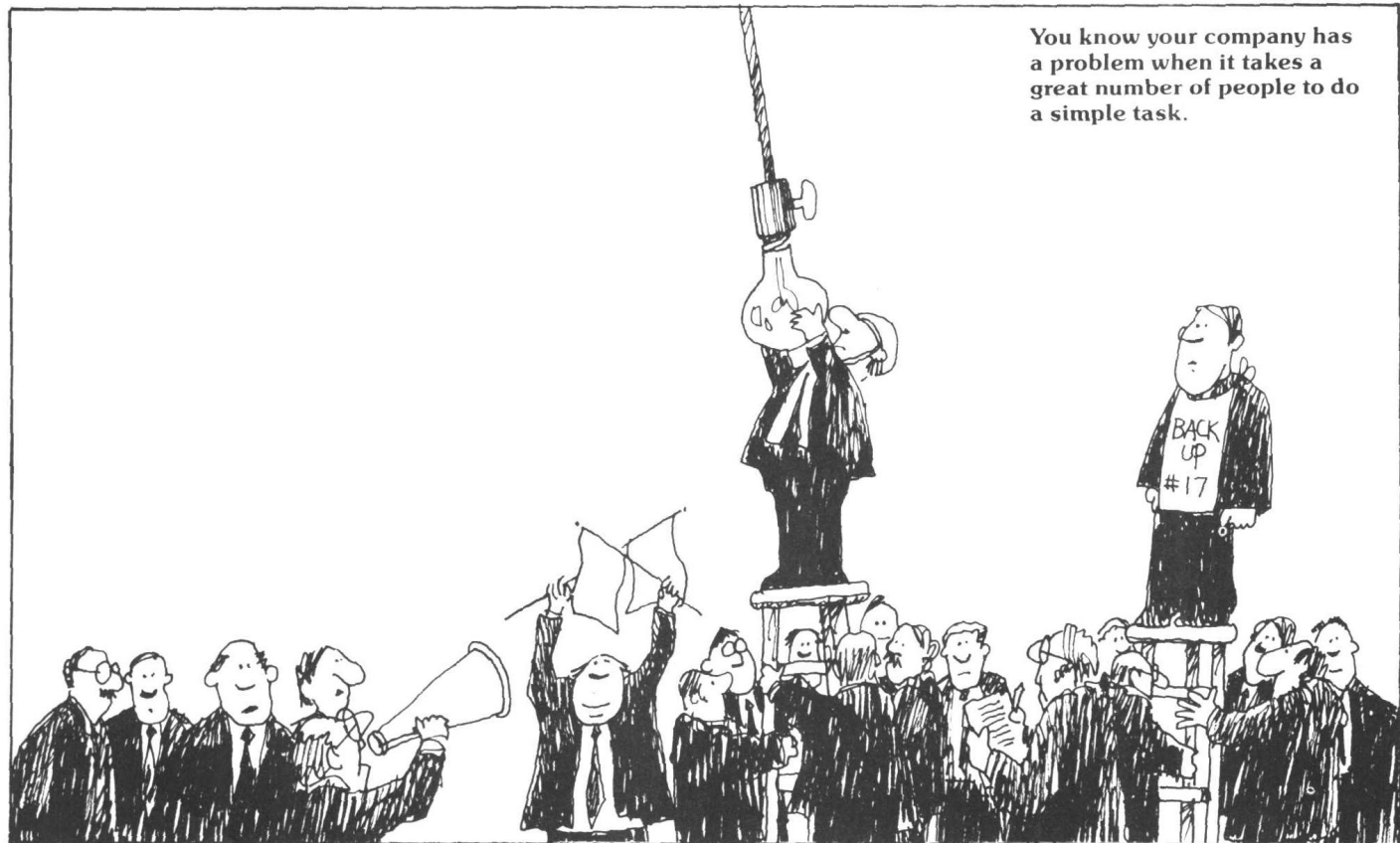
It doesn’t work to totally relinquish all control. The best approach is to be tight in the ends you hope to achieve but loose in the means that are used to reach these ends. The manager should take careful control of setting goals, for instance, and should see that everything the company does points itself to these goals. But the specific approaches individual members use to reach the goals should be more open.



No matter how straight and simple you think a project will be, it never is. Invariably there will be flux—and mistakes—between beginning and ending.

A good manager spends a lot of time setting things up and making sure everyone has a good picture of what’s expected. Then he lets his people go to work.

Death by Institutionalization



Symptoms of the Disease

When an organization becomes an end in itself, rather than a means to an end, paralysis and possibly death are near.

This process of an institution becoming its own end is called *institutionalization*.*

When a person catches a fatal disease, he often struggles with it as it slowly takes him to death. And, as death approaches, more and more of his resources (time, energy, money) are spent trying to maintain his life.

It's no different with an organization. And as death approaches, the organization will sap the strength of all around.

"Most hierarchies are nowadays so cumbered with rules and traditions, and so bound in by public laws, that even high employees do not have to lead anyone anywhere, in the sense of pointing out the direction and setting the pace. They simply follow precedents, obey regulations, and move at the head of the crowd. Such employees *lead* only in the sense that the carved wooden figurehead leads the ship."

Laurence J. Peter

Here are the ten danger signals to watch for:

1. A deepening fear of anything that questions.
2. A growing intolerance for anything out of line.
3. The term *old* becomes ever more applicable.
4. Individual initiative is an increasing pain in the neck.
5. A spreading belief that all wisdom, light, and knowledge come from on high.
6. A growing obsession with numbers.
7. A proliferation of rules and rule breakers.
8. More and more accomplishes less and less.
9. Communication is increasingly done by "ventriloquism," i.e., without personal interactions.
10. An increased standardization of the trivial.

* This is just a long word meaning that many people are doing what a few people could do better.

“The purpose of an organization is to enable ordinary human beings to do extraordinary things.”

Peter Drucker

History of the Illness

An organization is most productive when it is a means to an end. It should be a tool to build and to accomplish something. It shouldn't be a tyrant, dominating all for its own self-centered ego. When it becomes that, not only is it not productive, but it becomes a destroyer. It becomes an end in itself.

Many organizations start out with a spark of hope, an idea, and little else! But the lack of funds and the pressures against it are slowly overcome by the power of the people and their growing obsession to see it survive. It becomes a dynamic, living enterprise, and you can see that life on the faces of those involved.

But somewhere along the journey between birth and the *Fortune* 500, the people's creation starts to turn on them. It turns into a Frankenstein monster that feeds on the altruism of those involved.

The company becomes a law unto itself having a perfect view of the universe and all that is in it. Anything else is of little value or the work of moronic heretics. It fails to see the little cracks; after all, they are so small. It fails to heed the voices of warning; after all, they are but whispers. As the cracks get bigger, the eyesight grows dimmer. As the voices grow louder, the ears grow weaker.

When the company loses the spirit of its beginnings, and its sole purpose is its own survival, the buzzards start circling above—because something very precious down below has died.

Vicious Spiral of Behavior

Caught in a Vicious Spiral

Kathleen was having hard times as a sales manager. Every day she'd go to work and give her salespeople a good pep talk: "Get out there and get them!" she'd say. "Check out those referrals. Increase your customer list."

But every day the salespeople would perform just as they had before. Sales were decreasing—and Kathleen was starting to worry about her job security.

Kathleen's problem was that she was caught in a vicious spiral. The spiral held her in its clutches so that she couldn't get out. She

wanted to try another approach, but she didn't know how. All she knew was the way she'd done things in the past.

The vicious spiral is a common enemy of productivity:

- **Allen** is suffering job burnout. It's all he can do to go to work every morning. His boss doesn't make matters any better. Allen is stuck in the spiral, and his boss is keeping him there. "Allen, you



People who get caught in a vicious cycle of behavior find it difficult to get out. Instead, they just repeat the same behavior patterns over and over again.

The more a person walks over the same old territory, the deeper his rut grows.



"You've got to do better!"

"Your performance stinks!"

"I'm doing just fine!"

"You can't fire me. Don't forget my sister is on the board of directors!"



should do this now. Then do this. Then do that.”

“I sure wish he’d take a little initiative,” the boss says. But he can’t—he’s stuck in the spiral.

- **Mom** has a daily struggle with Becky in the two hours before school. “Make your bed,” she says at eight o’clock.

At eight-ten she checks up on Becky: “Have you made your bed? Go make it!”

At eight-fifteen: “Haven’t you got that bed made yet? I can’t believe it!”



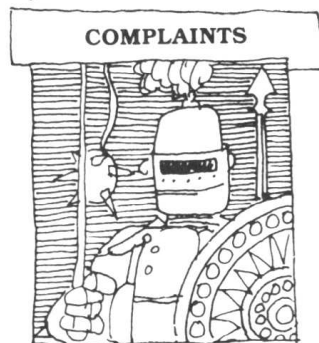
At eight-eighteen: “I’m not going to tell you again. Get up there and make that bed!”

At eight-thirty: “I’m going to go up and check your bed now, and it sure better be made!”

At eight-thirty-one: “All right! You’re in trouble, young lady!”

And so on. It’s the vicious spiral, and neither Mom nor Becky is having much luck at getting out of it. And of course Mom ends up making the bed every day.

- **The management at Woodworks, Inc.**, is having the same problem. “We’ve got to have better customer relations,” the boss says. “You’ve got to do a heck of a lot better, people.”

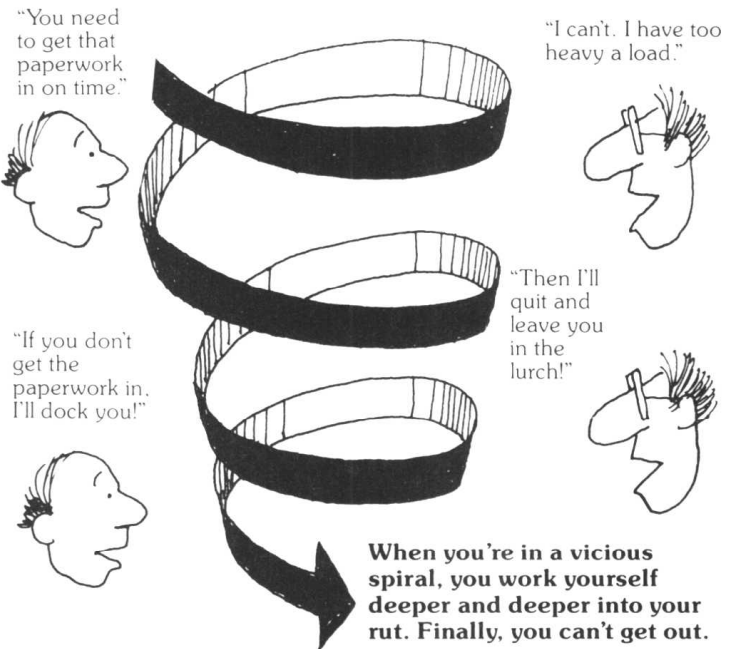


“You’ve got to have better customer relations!”

“Yeah, yeah,” the people respond.

Then they go on doing what they were doing before. They’re all stuck in the vicious spiral.

Can you imagine how devastating the spiral can be to productivity in all its forms?



As long as we persist in our old, nonproductive ways of doing things, we'll be stuck in a vicious spiral and be unable to improve.

And if everyone is sharing the same frame of reference, the problem will be even worse. It will persist and intensify. Attempted solutions to the problem won't make any difference.

You've probably seen the spiral in your work or home. The boss or the mom or dad says, “Let's try this new approach.” Everyone agrees. But it doesn't make any difference. Two weeks later it's, “Let's try this approach now.” And everyone gives it a good try. But nothing takes.

Only one solution will work: The people stuck in the spiral must change their frame of reference. Band-Aids won't work here—what's called for is major surgery. The old game needs to be replaced with a new one.

- **Randy** desperately needed to get in touch with a writing collaborator who was a

Getting stuck in a rut is more dangerous now than it's ever been. Things are changing so rapidly in the world that internal change is becoming increasingly critical.

professor. He called the professor at work. She wasn't there, but the secretary was happy to take a message. He called the professor's home. The professor wasn't there either, but her husband was happy to take a message. But the professor never returned the calls.

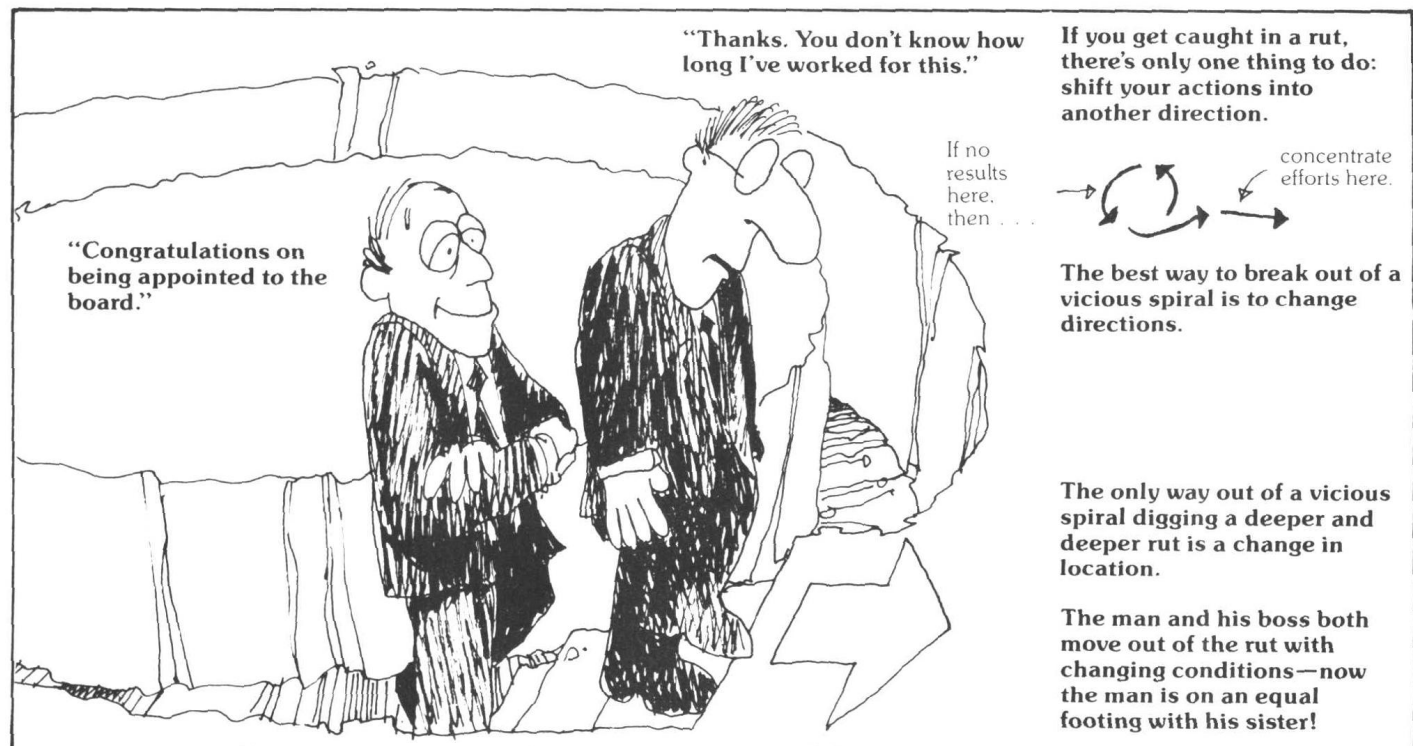
Every other day Randy called his professor friend, but he could never get in touch. He was stuck in a vicious spiral, and he knew it. Finally he decided to change the frame of reference. He had been calling and saying, "This is Randy. Please have the professor call." So he changed and said, "This is Captain Wilson. It's urgent that I speak with the professor."

As you might imagine, we all had a good laugh when Randy hung up!

That approach was a little deceptive. Randy was *not* a Captain Wilson. But it got results. The professor jumped to the conclusion that the police were calling her about something. Suddenly she wasn't too busy to return his calls. The professor called back within five minutes.

Getting Out of the Spiral

- **Allen's boss** wants him to take initiative. He changes his direction to break out of the spiral. "Here's a job you need to do," the boss says. "I don't care how you do it; that's entirely up to you."
- **Mom** is tired of fighting Becky about making her bed every morning. And she's tired of ending up making it herself. So she changes direction. She stuffs her mouth full of soda crackers and, breathing heavily, proceeds to make the bed smooth and neat. With crackers all over the sheets. After two days of sleeping in a crummy bed, Becky decides to make her own bed. Mom didn't have to say another word.
- **The managers at Woodworks, Inc.**, want better customer relations, but their workers just don't seem to get the message. So they change directions to get out of their vicious spiral. They have each of the workers visit several other businesses as *customers* to see how they like to be treated. Suddenly their customer relations improve.



Three Steps toward Needed Change

Once you've recognized the need for change in your organization, it's time to take action. But what do you do? This book will give you many ideas. Your own brain can give you many others. But you need to get these ideas out.

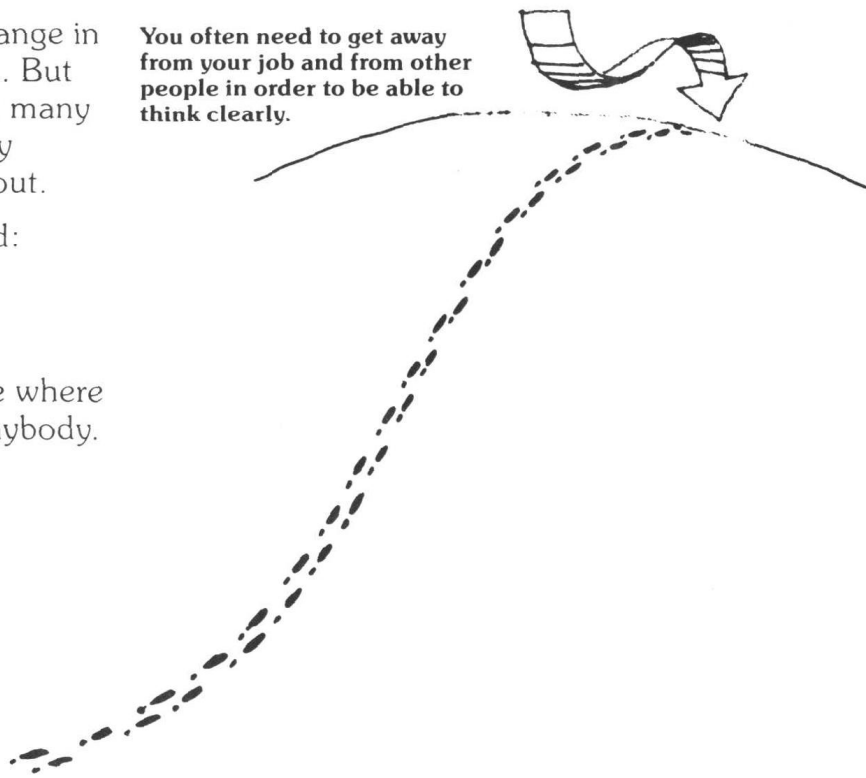
Three steps to getting the ideas you need:

Step 1

Get a pen and paper. Then go to a place where you won't be disturbed by anything or anybody.

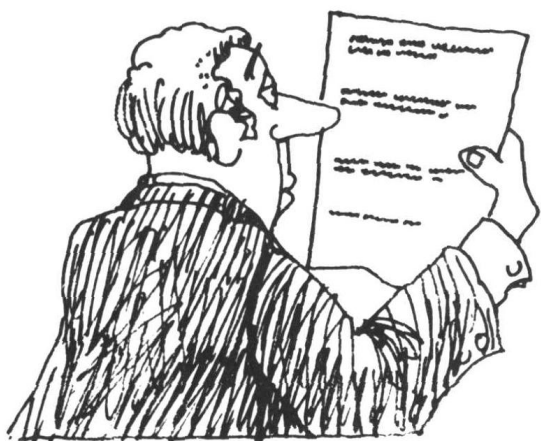


You often need to get away from your job and from other people in order to be able to think clearly.



Step 2

Sit down and list all the things that slow your company down, that keep you from being more productive. Don't worry about the quality of your ideas; you want to go for quantity. Write as many ideas as you can, as fast as you can, until you've filled up one side of the page. Leave a little space between each entry; you'll use that space on the next step.



After you've made your list, filter out the dross and form a clear statement of what each problem is. Be sure to go after the problem, not its symptoms.

You should be able to come up with lots of ideas. Most of them won't work, but you need only one to enjoy a breakthrough.

Step 3

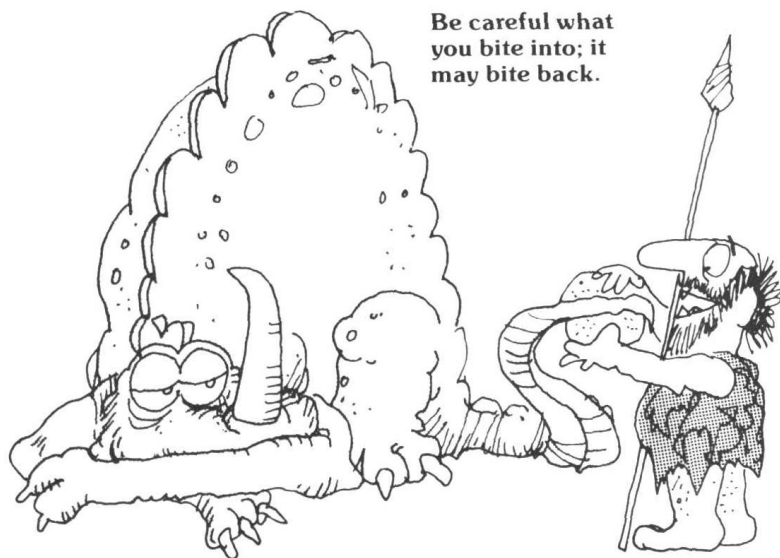
Now, using the blank space you left on the page, write three things you can do to solve each of the problems you listed. After you've written your solutions, list each one in order of priority and then ACT.

ACTION is the most critical part. Without it, everything else is a waste of time.



Success depends on getting away from it all, finding a place where you can be alone. This is a simple thing—so simple that we often fail to do it.

Biting Off More Than You Can Chew



Too often we let foggy perceptions, based on false premises, obscure what we can and cannot do. We see things as we want them to be, not as they really are. The result is that we bite off more than we can chew—and when we do that, we usually end up gagging on it!

Foggy Perceptions

In 1982, Braniff Airlines shocked the business world by declaring bankruptcy. The cause? They bit off more than they could chew. After the federal government deregulated the airline industry in 1978, Braniff began to expand at an incredible rate. They moved into new areas, trying to get more routes and more customers. They went into a price war with other airlines.

In Braniff's effort to make the golden goose produce more eggs, they killed it off!

The problem of foggy perceptions and false premises plagues people in every area of their lives. It runs from their home lives to their business lives and even into their recreation. Usually their work and the rest of their worlds are going backward, rather than forward.

Invincible Jesse

Jesse James was on the top of the world. He was one of the most wanted criminals in the United States. He had acquired tens of thousands of dollars through his bank and stage robberies. He invented the art of train robbery. Apparently he began to think he was invincible, because in 1876 he bit off more than he could chew. He and seven other gang members attempted to rob the First National Bank at Northfield, Minnesota. Of the eight robbers, only two escaped—Jesse and his brother, Frank. The other six were either killed or captured.

So much for the famous James gang. They were done in by trying to bite off more than they could chew.

“Can-Do” People

Too many of our businesses today are run by macho men and wonder women. These are “can-do” people who figure that “nothing's impossible as long as you believe.” That kind of attitude is fine for a Hollywood musical, but in the real world we need to deal with reality. There are limits for every business. There's a place where every gang should stop.

Whenever we start something new, we need to take a good look at every aspect of it. The crucial question to ask is this: “Is the direction I'm heading in leading me into a situation I won't be able to handle?”

