



# *Call Yourself a Manager!*

MATTHEW ARCHER

154

2



29.154  
A 672

# *Call Yourself a Manager!*

MATTHEW ARCHER



MERCURY BOOKS

Published by W.H. Allen & Co. Plc

Copyright © 1987 Matthew Archer

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise without the prior permission of the publishers.

First published March 1987

Reprinted January 1988

Published by the Mercury Books Division of

W.H. Allen & Co. Plc

44 Hill Street, London W1X 8LB

Typeset in Meridien by

Phoenix Photosetting, Chatham, Kent

Printed and bound in Great Britain by

Mackays of Chatham Ltd, Chatham, Kent

Cartoons by Andrew Birch

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed upon the subsequent purchaser.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

Archer, Matthew

Call yourself a manager

1. Management 2 Business

I. Title

658 HD31

ISBN 1-85252-000-0

## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the business world there are thousands of people trying desperately hard to become 'a manager'. Some of those who have made it to a management position have aspirations to become the 'chief executive'.

The reasons for wishing to become a manager are many and varied, including status, security, megalomania and money. There was one aspiring executive who gave his reason for wishing to be a manager as the opportunity to push other people around as he had been pushed around for a number of years!

The supreme problem, having achieved the title of manager, is how to behave like one. Management, particularly at top level, is one of the most difficult and demanding jobs – and one where perfection is impossible to attain.

It is not too difficult to acquire the technical knowledge (e.g. engineering, sales technique, mathematics) that goes with the job but the human element is much more elusive. Managers, being human (at least most of them), are subject to their own emotional and other weaknesses. Their performance can be affected by their fears, prejudices, lifestyle and relationships with others, such as subordinates, colleagues and outsiders, who are also affected by fears, prejudices and so on. They are also subject to the politics of business and the professional mysteries of specialists such as computer programmers, accountants and lawyers.

The manager can find himself (or herself) battling all at once with a rebellious workforce that just will not understand the facts, a chief accountant who persists in pressing incomprehensible financial points, a feeling that he is somehow not looking after his budget properly and a fellow manager who attacks him at every possible opportunity. All in all, a fairly ghastly prospect which makes one wonder why anyone wants to be a manager at all!

The fact is that the majority of people who become managers receive no training in advance and are blissfully unaware of the agonies that lie ahead. Having become, usually painfully, aware of these agonies, many managers will seek an easy way out. While very few opt for a self-inflicted bullet in the brain, many turn a blind eye to the demands of their jobs.

It is entirely possible for a manager to go through his or her career ignoring many of the responsibilities of the job – even ending up as chief executive – without ever having fully managed at all. Some take such a way out knowingly. Others, like the workaholic, are entirely unaware that they are ducking their responsibilities and, indeed, will argue that their dedication and hard work is proof of their conscientiousness.

This book deals with some of those requirements of management which come as a surprise to those who arrive untrained at management level and may be painful to those who prefer to ignore the problems, hoping they will go away. The manager who takes refuge in committees and meetings, the manager who shelters behind his ignorance or prejudices and the manager who dedicates himself to an obsession with pointless accuracy are all commented on.

It is certainly true that the manager who identifies, accepts and teaches himself to handle the problems will not only be a better manager but will enjoy his working life much more. To those who wish to achieve this enjoyment this book is dedicated.

Business students may find the book an entertaining

supplement to the tougher items on their reading lists and, at the other end of the scale, chief executives should find something of particular relevance to their personal policy and philosophy. The contents are based on real-life experience and all the examples are real — if disguised. It is fervently hoped that every reader will find the contents thought-provoking.

The notations he/she, his/hers, etc., being cumbersome to read, have been kept to a minimum. Unless the context otherwise dictates, the gender used should be read as including both sexes.





## CONTENTS

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Introduction                             | 5   |
| 1 The Compleat Manager                   | 11  |
| 2 The Chief Executive                    | 19  |
| 3 The Manager and the Accountants        | 35  |
| 4 The Manager and Conflict               | 43  |
| 5 The Manager and Prejudice              | 55  |
| 6 The Workaholic Manager                 | 61  |
| 7 The Manager and Profit                 | 69  |
| 8 The Manager and Persuasion             | 79  |
| 9 The Manager and Meetings               | 91  |
| 10 Anarchy, Rebellion and Leadership     | 99  |
| 11 The Perfectionist Manager             | 107 |
| 12 The Manager and Humour                | 113 |
| 13 The Professional Manager              | 119 |
| Appendix 1 – Sources of Help and Ideas   | 121 |
| Appendix 2 – Making Your Reading Pay Off | 123 |



## THE COMPLEAT MANAGER

A consultant was discussing various problems with a sales manager in charge of a team of six salesmen. The manager was asked how he defined his job:

'To get some work out of these bastards,' was his reply.

The sales manager was absolutely serious about this simple definition and could see no other function for which he was responsible. This man, formerly a very successful salesman, had been promoted to sales manager without any training in management skills. It had not occurred to him that he might assume a responsibility to teach his subordinates some of the skills that had enabled him to succeed as a salesman himself. To have done so would, in view of the commission arrangements, have been in his own financial interest, but this had apparently escaped his notice. Nor did he recognise any other responsibilities inherent in his job, such as planning the work of his team and ensuring that they contributed to his company's profitability. He was nothing more than a 'driver' who had been born too late. His singleminded approach would have made him a first-class master of a slave galley.

Many (perhaps most) managers take a narrow, parochial view of their jobs. By excluding many of the more tiresome responsibilities, they can make life more bearable. A limited range of responsibilities makes life simpler. Unfortunately a

nice, simple life is unlikely to be the lot of the truly professional manager, who must recognise, accept and practise a wide range of activities in order to achieve his objectives. He must also recognise, and be able to cope with, the attitudes of other managers.

Another sales manager, of milder temperament, was equally narrow in his approach. His answer to a similar question regarding his role was 'To give service to customers'.

At first glance such a definition might seem reasonable. However, further consideration gives rise to doubts as to what was implied. A customer can always be given service *at a price*. A warehouse expensively stocked with every variation of product might be part of the service. Delivery (by chartered jet) of every nut or bolt urgently required might be another. In other words, this man's anxiety to keep his customers happy might bankrupt the company.

Incidentally, the production boss of the same company was asked how he saw his role. His reply was: 'If I can keep the bloody sales department off my back, my life is more bearable. I keep the warehouse as full as possible. What they don't realise is that the demands for small quantities of "specials" interrupts production runs and reduces output'. The production man's role had been reduced to one of maintaining high stocks (at any cost) as a result of the sales manager's simple wish to give service (at any cost).

None of these managers showed any concern for their human resources or with the prosperity of the business. Their single-minded approach was paramount and this was obviously not working to the good of the firm.

To achieve optimum profits and maintain a sensible balance between the costs of each function it is essential that each department works to a plan. This plan will set limits to the actions of department heads – directing them through programmes which are complementary, minimising waste and achieving the best possible performance for the firm *as a whole*.

Perhaps one explanation for dedication to a narrow

objective lies in the attitude behind a remark heard in a hotel corridor. Two managers attending a fairly intensive course on management skills were discussing the work done so far. One manager commented that he was surprised how much there was to management. The other replied: 'I find all this management business quite fascinating but too difficult . . . Actually I don't think I want anything to do with it'!

If these attitudes are in any way typical, they are also more than a little frightening to anyone trying to run a business. Drucker in his book *The Practice of Management* says that the manager is the 'dynamic life giving element' in the business. Without a manager's leadership the resources of production remain as resources and never actually become production. If 'managers' want nothing to do with management, then the company is doomed.

Drucker also maintains that the best definition of management is provided by examining the manager's role. Many managers, at seminars and courses, have asked for a definition of management (or administration as some people like to call it). They have in many cases been seeking a simple one-line statement. No such simple definition exists, and it is indeed necessary to look at the manager's role and spell it out in full.

A definition in terms of the manager's role reveals two levels of responsibility or prime function but with both levels requiring similar skills:

- 1 *The top management role.* This role deals with policy decisions concerning the objectives of the organisation and the conduct of its affairs. For example, what sort of business are we going to operate? (Clock-making? Hotels? Franchise?). Where are we going to operate? (Worldwide? Europe? London? The regions?). How will the business be organised? What return on capital do we expect?, etc.
- 2 *The middle and lower management role.* This concerns decisions regarding methods. For example, *how* will operations be organised? What level of output is needed in

order to meet the demands of top management? How can this output be economically achieved? These decisions must then be translated into action – in short, middle and lower management has to produce results to meet the requirements of the policy-makers. In order to produce results, managers must work effectively with the resources at their disposal. The main resources are people. The manager, therefore, must work through the people to get the results. The more effectively the manager uses (i.e. leads) them, the more easily will he be able to produce the required results.

Effective use of human resources comprises:

- Selection of staff
- Training and development of staff
- Communication with staff
- Planning and organising work
- Control of results
- Motivation of staff

In order to meet these demands the manager needs certain personal qualities combined with executive and technical skills. The personal qualities, which result from education, character and various influences over the years include such features as:

- Approachability (Sorry, but there seems to be no better word)
- Sensitivity to others and their feelings
- Flexibility of outlook
- Balance and maturity
- Ability to think logically and clearly
- Dependability

These characteristics should be present in sufficient measure for a manager to be able to adopt a more constructive and sophisticated role than merely 'getting some work out of the bastards'.

The executive skills will include:

Ability to communicate (which includes listening)

Ability to co-operate

Ability to make decisions

These may sound very obvious but there are many managers who can give orders but cannot communicate. They are often the same ones who regard co-operation as loss of a battle. There are also far too many managers unwilling or unable to make decisions. It is not suggested that all decisions should be made on the spur of the moment. The trick is to find a balance between impulsive decisions and thinking it over into infinity.

Technical skills consist of:

A good background of commercial and industrial practice

A good knowledge of the business

Specialist knowledge of the work of the manager's own unit

Ability to organise and control

Ability to select and use management techniques.

So, to be a manager in anything more than name is asking quite a lot. However, with the qualities and skills listed he should, with a measure of flair and commonsense, be able to achieve – and help his staff to achieve. In other words, he will be a leader. Successive chapters deal with some of the leadership problems which can arise (including some of the less easily defined problems) within the context of the factors stated above.

### Action checklist

- 1 Accept the fact that true management requires the practice of a wide range of skills and involvement in many areas of activity.
- 2 Identify the knowledge and skills required, acquire them and put them into practice.

The first step is to identify any 'areas' which can be improved. This can be done by self-assessment (no embarrassing exposure to colleagues is necessary!)



Use a simple tick-chart as follows:

| Attribute                     | Poor | Fair | Average | Good |
|-------------------------------|------|------|---------|------|
| Technical know-how            |      |      |         |      |
| Relations with staff          |      |      |         |      |
| Relations with other managers |      |      |         |      |
| Flexibility                   |      |      |         |      |
| Ability to make decisions     |      |      |         |      |
| ... and so on                 |      |      |         |      |

**Note:** do not leave out any of the essential attributes and do not cheat!

- 3** Refer to the Appendix on page 121 for sources of help in cases where anything less than Good has been ticked.