
ACHIEVING EXCELLENCE

**A Prescription for Health Care
Managers**

**Lawrence C. Bassett
Norman Metzger**



AN ASPEN PUBLICATION

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To my mother, Genia, who always has managed by common sense, and to my wife, Charlotte, whose common sense always has enabled her to manage.

Lawrence C. Bassett

To my family—ever supportive, ever loving, ever approving.

Norman Metzger

PRESS ON

NOTHING IN THE WORLD CAN TAKE THE PLACE OF PERSISTENCE. TALENT WILL NOT; NOTHING IS MORE COMMON THAN UNSUCCESSFUL MEN WITH TALENT. GENIUS WILL NOT; UNREWARDED GENIUS IS ALMOST A PROVERB. EDUCATION ALONE WILL NOT; THE WORLD IS FULL OF EDUCATED DERELICTS. PERSISTENCE AND DETERMINATION ALONE ARE OMNIPOTENT.

Calvin Coolidge

A GENERATION OF MANAGERS HAS BEEN TRAINED BY OUR BUSINESS SCHOOLS TO MAKE MONEY NOT GOODS. GRIPPED BY A DOGMA CALLED "MANAGEMENT SCIENCE" THE SCHOOLS HAVE PLAYED AN IMPORTANT INSTITUTIONAL ROLE IN THE EROSION OF COMPETENCE FOR PRODUCTION.

Seymour Melman

SURVIVAL IN AN ORGANIZATION IS A POLITICAL ACT.

Bacharach and Lawler

Introduction: The Seeds of Success

How does one survive in a paranoid world of health care management? How does a manager or aspiring manager survive in the rapidly changing environment of the American workplace? For decades, books, articles, seminars, speakers, and sages have promulgated concepts and theories, offering management innovations and a plethora of forums, films, and now video cassettes. Somehow, none of these has provided the answer, nor the help that satisfies fully. Textbooks frequently are too long, too sophisticated, or not effectively adaptable to the job. Gimmicky books do not consider the broad range of responsibilities of managers. Surely, something more and different is needed.

This book is the product of nearly 50 years of managing, training, consulting—of doing! It is a management cookbook of recipes that have been tested and retested. It is a survival kit for those who want answers. It is a treasure chest of management gems that work in the health care field; they have worked for us, they have worked for successful managers and leaders, they have worked for politicians and statesmen—and they can work for you.

The book's aim is to demystify management. It shows that management is a logical, common-sense and practical process. It does what textbooks cannot do, in that it puts concept and theory into practical terms. It goes beyond the *One Minute Manager*; it covers what the *One Minute Manager*—and other books like it—leave out. It will enable you to manage yourself, manage your employees, and manage your bosses. Included in this book is a Supervisors' Checklist (Appendix A), a soul-searching exercise directed toward key management personnel in health care facilities. The Motivation Feedback Questionnaire (Appendix B) helps to identify what motivates the employees and the degree of emphasis in order to help the supervisor direct attention to determine organizational and employee needs. Appendix C—Semantic-Differential Test—enables you to look at yourself as your employer sees you.

However, we are realists; we recognize that implementation of our suggestions and recommended approaches may require changes in your normal style and mode of operation. But we have learned that people are not afraid of change. The view that people are afraid of change is a myth, and this book is a shrinker of myths. What people really are afraid of is the impact of change; they are afraid of the feelings of inadequacy, of the ignorance or discomfort, that may come with change. We fear the unknown, the unexpected, the different. We try to avoid the insecurity that may come with change—but we do not fear change itself.

Obviously, there is no point in reading this book unless you do plan some changes, and you are put on notice that you might feel insecure and nervous with a new approach or action. You might be tempted to return to familiar ways, where you are secure and comfortable. Resist! If you see others are made insecure or uncomfortable because you now do things differently, expect it and understand it—but continue. Of course, after you adopt a change, it will not be long before it becomes “normal” and no longer a change.

The health care industry is undergoing incredible and rapid change. It is as exciting as it is bewildering. The manager who is willing and able to change with it will reap an abundance of rewards.

A caveat: things that are simple may not be easy. The game of golf is simple. You need only use a club to hit a small ball into a little hole in the ground; but its very simplicity creates its difficulties. To paraphrase a popular song, we do not promise you a rose garden; we do promise that you can succeed. In our work with thousands of health care managers, we have learned that the only thing that separates the successful from the unsuccessful is sheer stick-to-it-iveness, old-fashioned persistence, and unshakeable determination.

The Peter Principle says (only partially tongue-in-cheek) that people rise to their level of incompetence.¹ We reject it. People rise to fulfill their self-perceptions. Our personal self-fulfilling prophecies determine how far we go and how successful we might be. If we determine something will work, and keep at it and work at it, eventually it will. If we do not believe in eventual success or that we have the necessary abilities, odds are we will fail. Are these the seeds of success? Nearly 50 years of hands-on experience says yes.

Thus, though we do not promise you a rose garden, you can create your own! You can survive while others languish. You do not have to take it anymore!

NOTES

1. Laurence Peter and Raymond Hull, *The Peter Principle* (New York: Bantam Books, 1970), p. 82.

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The Ultimate Carrot: The Art of Applied Motivation

IN HEGEL'S VIEW, WE EXIST ONLY WHEN WE ARE ACKNOWLEDGED, AND OUR PRESENT AGE IS CHARACTERIZED BY A CLAMOR FOR ACKNOWLEDGMENT AS IF NO ONE WAS SURE HE EXISTED.

Anatole Broyard

To many, motivation is like the weather. We talk about it, complain about it, and are frustrated with it. And we may not think there is much we can do about it. Yet we apply motivation and use its principles every day. The problem is our lack of control. Control is a key element; if you gain control, you can use motivation as a tool of power with the employees you manage, with others with whom you must work, and with your bosses upon whom you must depend.

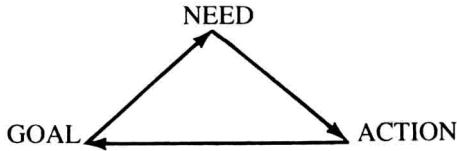
You don't have to be a psychologist or a sophisticated manager to make effective use of motivation. Many managers have not even heard of names like Maslow, Herzberg, Likert, and McGregor. Indeed, when you are under pressure and times are troubled, as they are in today's unpredictable health care universe, there is little opportunity to study theory or concept. What is needed are answers and practical tools that will work for you. (You do not need to know electrical theory when you throw a light switch; all you need to know is whether you can make it work.)

THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A LAZY PERSON!

People may appear lazy—at times we all do—but appearances mask the dynamics taking place below the surface.

THE PROBLEM: FINDING THE LEVERS OF MOTIVATION

Here is a motivation formula that is as practical as it is real. Understanding and using it will enable you to motivate yourself as well as others. The formula is a triangular path that governs all our behavior:



When you have a need (a wish, a desire, a want, a life requirement), it moves you into action.

You stay in action, in one form or another, seeking to reach a goal that will satisfy the need.

Yet action ceases when the need is satisfied, and no action takes place until the need surfaces.

There are no exceptions. Without need, hopes, or wants, we languish, we stop taking action. Without a “need to live,” for example, aged citizens confined to lonely nursing homes have been known to cease the action needed to stay alive. Thus, so-called lazy persons, people who appear to lack initiative, are simply persons who, at a particular time, either have no current desires (needs) or do not believe that any action on their part will achieve a desirable goal.

TEST YOURSELF

Imagine your return home at the end of an exhausting day at work. You're sleepy and fatigued; you have to make your own dinner, and you're too tired even to venture out to a restaurant.

1. Would you make an elaborate meal or just something to get by with?
2. Would you bother to do the work you brought home with you if it's not required the next day on the job?
3. How pleasant would your mood be?
4. How eager would you be to do anything that required a lot of physical exertion?

Then the phone rings. It's your boss, telling you that you have an opportunity to work on a special project that could mean a big promotion and a big raise. You're told that you were selected because there is confidence that you are the best person for the assignment.

(Or, it's a friend. He's just received tickets for an impossible-to-get-tickets-for show that you have been eager to see but never thought you would. The tickets are for that night.)

Ask yourself—"How would I respond?"

Probably with enthusiasm and the feeling of exhilaration.

Your fatigue would disappear and be replaced by an eagerness to get into action.

You tell yourself, "I just got a second wind."

The fact is that the existence of a need or desire determines whether you take action, and what further action you'll take; the strength of the need determines the strength of the action. No matter how fatigued you are, if a need is uncovered that is stronger than your need for rest and sleep, you will go into action to achieve the goal. You return to your fatigued state only after the goal that you seek has been achieved.

COROLLARIES

The strength of the need—the strength of the action. As needs increase or lessen, action increases or lessens.

Examples of the motivation formula at work are in evidence everyday, sometimes quite dramatically. When in desperate situations, people who are eager to stay alive—even rational, educated, highly principled people—often commit acts that might be considered outlandish or even macabre. You may be familiar with the story of the Donner Party. The story was chronicled in San Francisco newspapers and was produced as a television special. A group of American pioneers, during the winter of 1846–47 after spending nearly a year together crossing the continent, were trapped by snow in the Sierra Nevada Mountains. In their attempt to stay alive, they resorted to cannibalism. Their very intense needs produced very intense actions.

Our newspapers and news broadcasts are filled with examples of heroics and seemingly superhuman efforts, such as reports of athletes who surpass themselves under intense competition. Such stories are examples of people who had great needs and took strong action to meet those needs.

The motivation formula explains almost everything we do. The hard-driving employee whose need to succeed drowns out all other interests, the employee who attends night school year after year because of the need to get a college degree, the

person who holds two jobs because of a strong need to buy a home—all are commonplace examples.

A study of history is a study of motivation, of the powerful drives that enabled many of the greats to achieve immortality. Julius Caesar's need to become master of the known world drove him relentlessly. DaVinci's drive to learn the secrets of nature and to express his passions in art drove him to many conquests. Columbus's craving to succeed where no other seafarer had before him led him to great journeys. Thomas Edison's insatiable curiosity led him to many discoveries. Henry Ford's competitive drive to sell cars led to the creation of the assembly line. And the masterful effort of NASA to put a man on the moon showed what can happen when a team is motivated to achieve a common goal.

WHAT YOU NEED TO DO

To motivate another, you have to make a deal. You offer to exchange a goal that the person wishes to achieve for an "action" that you desire. If an employee does something well, you make it worth his while. If a person in another department does you a favor, you make it worth her while. It's a barter.

Unfortunately, although the motivation formula is simple, its application is sometimes difficult because we don't know what it is others really want or need. We may *think* we know, but a human being is a very complex organism that hides behind a thick facade, and the facade often prevents others from knowing what it is that makes the person tick. Many of us do not even know our own needs and motivations, and, if we have trouble identifying our own goals, how can we expect to know what it is that others want? How can we find out if they themselves may not be consciously aware of what drives them?

In a health care setting, where there is a wide variety of skills, professions, and disciplines and where there are many men and women working around the clock seven days a week, finding the answers to these questions is critical if we are to motivate our employees or our bosses. If we are to get others to respond to us, we have to uncover the motivators that stimulate action. Motivators come in a variety of forms; become familiar with them:

- *Hidden needs.* At one time or another, we all wish we could do something inappropriate, illegal, or just plain wrong. We have secret thoughts and wishes, and we do not want them known. Yet, some of these needs are very powerful action getters. Many a prominent figure has created a scandal

because of a hidden drive, satisfied in a secret life, that suddenly became public.

- *Symbolic needs.* Society has taught us to value status symbols. In *Games People Play*, Eric Fromm describes the game called “Mine is Bigger Than Yours.” This is a game that is frequently played in the corporate suite, where the size of an office, the expense of the furnishings, or a title on the door becomes a much sought-after prize. Symbolism is important. In the late 1940s, when television was still in its infancy, many people placed television antennae on their roofs to show their neighbors that they owned a TV, when in fact there was no TV inside the home. In Scandinavia, it is a practice in some businesses to pay higher wages to those whose offices are windowless, since, symbolically, their lifestyles are being diminished. (It has long been believed that money is a principal symbolic need to a worker since the amount of a salary may indicate the worker’s status level within the company.)
- *Emotional needs.* Perhaps the most difficult motivations to explain or to deal with are those that are emotional in nature. Sometimes such needs defy rationalization. The desire to get even with a former tyrannical boss has prompted many a worker to tell the boss what an s.o.b. the boss is, even though, for that momentary satisfaction of getting even, the possibility of a decent reference may be destroyed. We do many things, some of them stupid, in which the momentary pleasure we get is outweighed by the repercussions. The strength of the emotional need leads us into an action for which we are later sorry. In the health care setting, the emotional needs of patients are clearly revealed while they are in our care.
- *Changing needs.* Unfortunately, just when we believe we know what it is that makes an employee or ourselves tick, we often learn that it no longer is a strong motivator. Our needs change; they change as they are satisfied, or as something else provides a more powerful incentive. The employee with the reputation for punctuality and high-quality work (to satisfy the need for approval and success on the job) suddenly has a change in value systems after falling in love. The affection of and the need for a mate lead to passions that reduce job performance. Or a highly motivated executive striving to make a sale suddenly loses interest in the sale when faced with a personal crisis.
- *Conflicting needs.* While the strength of a need determines the strength of the action, there are times when more than one need is important. Consider a choice between two jobs, one that offers a good opportunity in a renowned medical center but requires a move to another part of the country, and another in a local community hospital that is located a few minutes from home but does not offer the same potential as the medical center. Such a choice creates a conflict in needs of many men and women in the job marketplace. Daily,

we are confronted with such decisions. We might at times need to decide between two highly desirable alternatives, such as one that means credit for a subordinate and another that might bring some personal glory.

- *Short- and long-term needs.* Managers frequently are asked how they can motivate employees in dead-end jobs. A nursing assistant will never become an RN by merely working hard. And while theorists might offer explanations and conceptual answers, persons who feel trapped do not work up to their full potential. Yet a practical manager can motivate a person who is at a dead-end by providing a continual array of short-term goals, each of which will satisfy some immediate need and propel the person during the day. When you must work on your feet, a pebble in your shoe is a greater motivator than the long-range potential of the job. We are influenced more by the *now* than by the *later*. The proper use of short-term goals or incentives can provide a most effective stimulator of daily increased productivity, cooperation, and initiative.

An understanding of what motivates people is important if you are going to succeed in developing a strong and loyal workforce and maintaining it to assert all of its efforts and imagination to support you. It is also the key element in the decision-making process. If there is any doubt about the importance of understanding and mastering the art of uncovering needs, consider what can happen when those who work for you are unable to attain any need-satisfying goals. Consider the feelings employees have when, no matter how hard they work, no matter how much energy, imagination, and devotion they give to the job, they have no sense of fulfillment, of having achieved the goals they have sought so long.

When an individual is blocked from achieving a goal, the result is called frustration.

The impact of frustration is enormous. One can understand why an organization fails simply by examining the impact of frustration.

TEST YOURSELF

You're waiting for the arrival of a cab to take you to the airport for a flight to an important meeting. The cab is already 30 minutes late. If you miss the plane, you miss the