Toward Managerial Effectiveness

Applied Research Perspectives on the Managerial Task

Edited by

John Machin, Rosemary Stewart and Colin Hales

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on the Managerial Task**

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TOWARD MANAGERIAL EFFECTIVENESS

This book has been developed by the Editors from the proceedings of a research symposium held at Durham University Business School in May, 1980, organised in association with the Training Services Division of the Manpower Services Commission.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

PURPOSE

This book presents the views of both managers and researchers on how to
help individual managers and groups of managers to become more effective.
The views expressed in the book are based on the results of research which
has involved thousands of managers and dozens of researchers and they
highlight and contrast two different approaches to researching the
managerial task and its effective performance.

   The "Demands, Constraints and Choices" approach developed
   by Rosemary Stewart of the Oxford Centre for Management Studies.

   The "Expectations Approach" developed by John Machin of
   the Durham University Business School.

  The material included in this book has been kept as free of 'jargon'
as possible because it has been written espressly to show that the
alleged gulf between managers and academics can be bridged. The work
documented in the book shows that the close co-operation of managers and
researchers has been successful in producing applicable and useful
insights and systems which can help individual managers to improve on
their current levels of performance.

  It is hoped that the managers who read this book will become more
confident and innovative in the demands they make on researchers, and
that researchers, trainers, and educationalists in the field of manage-
ment will find that the book stimulates them to rethink and broaden
their respective roles in assisting managers to be more effective.

  The notion of an 'effective manager' is a strong and favoured one in
management literature. Most people admire an 'effective' manager, many
people believe they can recognise one when they meet one, and many
managers undoubtedly strive to be effective. Despite these everyday
experiences, the fact remains that an enormous range of definitions of
the term have been offered over the past few decades and there is still
no widespread acceptance by either managers or academics of a 'best way'
to define or to measure, managerial effectiveness.

  There are some who would argue that if we can still neither define nor
measure effectiveness the main purpose in research should be to seek to
find ways to define and/or measure it. The questions their research
seeks ultimately to answer are: "How effective are managers? How
effective can they become?" *

*These are the questions posed at the front of the book based on an
earlier Symposium on managerial effectiveness: "Perspectives on
Managerial Effectiveness", Edited by Morris Brodie and Roger Bennett,
and published in 1979 by the Thames Valley Regional Management Centre.

This book documents the practical and operationally relevant results that have been achieved by managers and researchers working together to produce insights, systems, and knowledge, all aimed at answering a different question: "How can we help managers who wish to improve on their present level of effectiveness?"

The material in this book originates from a Symposium whose invited participants were drawn from senior line management, industrial management training specialists and academic specialists in managerial education and research. All the participants had, therefore, a professional interest in finding better ways of helping managers to improve their performance.

The main aim of the Symposium was to stimulate, provoke and encourage participants to argue and discuss each other's ideas to the point where practically useful and theoretically defensible ideas were generated. Another aim was to suggest research that needs to be undertaken to help managers to be more effective than they otherwise would be.

CONTENTS

The Chapters written by the Editors were prepared specifically for this book using points raised in discussion and argument during the Symposium to improve on the papers originally presented (Chapters 2 and 3) and to provide completely new material which documents and reflects the extent to which the Symposium achieved its main aim of stimulating new ideas (Chapters 8 and 9).

Dr. Johnson, Director of Training in the Manpower Services Commission, sets out in the first paper the contexts in which managers have to manage now and in the future. He argues that managerial research must be aimed at producing insights and systems that will help managers in dealing with the practical challenge of managing an increasingly complex and uncertain future.

Rosemary Stewart summarises her studies into managerial work and behaviour, drawing from the findings of each, those insights that have implications for our understanding of managerial effectiveness. Her paper offers a description of the framework for understanding managerial work and behaviour that developed during her more recent studies together with an illustration of its application to a particular managerial job.

John Machin presents an overview of how the 'Expectations Approach' systems and procedures have been developed jointly by the management control research team at Durham University Business School and 2,000 managers from more than 40 organisations during the last few years. The purpose of this predominantly manager-led research has been for the research team to develop the systems which managers themselves say they need to help them to become more effective. The author's contention is that the results of manager-led research are likely both to be practically useful and to give academics a better understanding of how to help managers to improve their own effectiveness in the future.

Adrian Woolley describes both the process and the results of a joint industry-University project, led by a group of senior managers in a public

utility, to develop a more effective system for senior managerial job planning and control. Developing a new system involves trial and error and the paper documents the history of the one 'unsuccessful' initiative as well as the many successful initiatives taken which have led to the completion of a fully operational system for managerial job planning, job control, and performance appraisal.

Gordon Wilson is a police inspector who was invited to explore the possibilities of using the Expectations Approach as a methodology for developing better job descriptions in the Royal Navy. In his paper he describes the process and results of his work in the Navy and then highlights the relevance of his findings as a researcher to his present needs as a manager in a disciplined environment.

Derek Craven writes of the ways in which, as the Managing Director of a small owner-managed company, (£3 m. turnover, 120 employees) he analysed the new information about his organisation produced as a result of using the Expectations Approach. In particular he has developed a way of identifying, clearly and quickly, those members of the organisation whose interaction with their working groups are less than satisfactory. A prime example of the practical benefits of managerial research being led by managers, this paper has already led to researchers developing the necessary computer software to make the form of analysis developed by one manager easily available to any manager.

Arthur Grosvenor is an occupational psychologist whose prior industrial and research experience led him to believe that the process itself of researching using the Expectations Approach was likely to affect the attitudes of the managers involved, quite apart from any change in behaviour arising from the results of the research. The Symposium provided an excellent opportunity for this author to obtain informed discussion of his research plans to test the direction and extent of managerial attitude change during the use of the Expectations Approach in a large modern hospital.

Colin Hales is a Senior Research Officer with the Manpower Services Commission, having a specialist interest in managerial training and research. His paper offers a comparative critique of the two methodologies of managerial research featured in the Symposium. It was written after the Symposium and his initiative in preparing it was stimulated as much by the contents of "Workshop" discussion and argument as by his own interest. His paper offers not only a critical perspective on the methodologies but also some indicators for future development.

John Machin and Rosemary Stewart prepared the final paper after the Symposium based on discussions during it and their review of the ideas that these discussions generated. In this concluding paper they suggest directions in which the active collaboration of managers and researchers may produce insights that will enable all of us both to manage a little more effectively in the future and to manage the future a little more effectively.

Contents

1 The context and challenge for managers
RON JOHNSON

I am glad to welcome each of you to this MSC-sponsored Symposium at the Durham University Business School. I know you are all busy people and I am pleased by your willingness to set aside the time to attend. I trust we will all find the experience worthwhile.

Since its inception the Manpower Services Commission has recognised the importance of Management Development. This was emphasised in the first five-year plan of the Training Services Agency in 1974. During 1974-5 we explored the management training and development scene and in 1966-7 we initiated a national debate on the subject involving people from industry, education and the public service. In 1978 the MSC published its definitive policy on Management Development and an action plan.

Several key issues emerged, e.g.

1. The need to ensure that all newly appointed managers receive a grounding in man (and woman) management and resource management;

2. The need for companies to decide what they want out of management development and to ensure that such activities really contribute to the companies goals;

3. The need for individual managers to assume responsibility for their own development: this requires companies which cultivate personal development and colleges which provide resources to help managers:-

    (a) identify their job-related learning needs; and,

    (b) meet their needs.

The MSC's current range of development, survey and research projects are designed to make progress in these areas. We are actively promoting self-development, problem centred learning, peer group methods, methods of identifying learning needs, management development and industrial relations, training audit instruments and coaching.

Management development is about helping managers learn to be more effective. That involves us in thinking about managerial effectiveness. Our discussions with other experts and our examination of the research results to date leads us to favour some kind of contingency approach. Some people seem to manage well in every situation. But many managers

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who excel in one situation can make a hash of it in another job. Often
it proves easier to identify the causes of failure than to spell out the
formula for success. Often there is more than one way to succeed in
management terms.

In January 1979 we held a joint symposium with the Thames Valley
Regional Management Centre, and the proceedings were published. (Brodie
and Bennett, 1979) That symposium was most helpful in opening up the
issues and indicating some of the parameters of managerial effectiveness.
We quickly abandoned simple notions of unitary measures of success
(e.g. profit). In real life management generally involves satisfying
several stakeholders at once.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL FACTORS

The world recession is having a very real effect on the UK and Europe
as a whole. Inflation is not restricted to Britain although some
countries (notably West Germany) have managed to contain it. The market
in which we operate is influenced profoundly by the comparatively low
labour costs coupled with traditional technology in third world countries
on the one hand and high volume high technology capital intensive output
from USA and Japan on the other. Britain has to carve out its own niche
in these highly competitive world markets.

Currently the strength of the £ sterling adds to the problems of
companies trying to export goods. The energy crisis is also having its
effect inspite of the oil reserves of the United Kingdom.

Import restrictions imposed by some overseas countries coupled with
legal constraints resulting from UKs membership of the EEC also inhibits
trade.

Alongside these economic pressures firms must do more than make a
profit for shareholders. If they are to succeed there are a number of
other stakeholders to be considered and satisfied in a balanced fashion.
Employees are considered to have a stake in the enterprise. Consumers
are increasingly well organised and insistent in their demands. The
Governments and the Banks have their say and suppliers are being more
cautious in their dealings. Effective top management today involves
maintaining a delicate balance in satisfying these various needs and
demands. This will require managers to accommodate to new kinds of
accountability - what one might term multiple accountability. It will
also require new qualities and new styles of leadership.

The modern businessman cannot ignore the social and environmental
impact of his business and firms must take into account wider issues like
unemployment, the plight of untrained young people, equality of opportunity
and so forth. Unemployment levels are of dramatic concern throughout the
European Community. The low level of wages compared to social security
benefits is also a problem in some areas.

The world is in danger of polarisation between the haves and the have-
nots in terms of material well-being and many believe that the relatively
more affluent countries must do more to redress this imbalance. Business
cannot ignore these issues. Within the UK we have the real possibility

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of a large number of people who will be permanently out of work, although MSC policies are designed specifically to reduce the number of people so deprived.

The labout market in the UK is currently characterised by a high level of unemployment (around 1.5 million), including a substantial number of people who have been out of work for a year or more (around 0.3 million). The number of people wanting to work is increasing (about 0.2 million annually) as the number of children who leave school and of women who go out to work exceeds the number of people who leave the labour market. The use of average percentage figures for unemployment tends to hide regional and sub-regional variations which are substantial. This means that unemployment can reach well over twenty per cent in some areas.

These levels of unemployment exist alongside unmet demands for skilled workers. The number of notified vacancies (about 0.25 million) seriously understates the true position which could be as high as 0.7 or 0.8 million. Attempts to overcome these shortages by training alone will have but limited success as the reasons for these problems are complex.

Alongside these factors in the external labour market firms have to cope with comprehensive legislation which regulates the internal labour market – the allocation, redeployment, training and promotion of people, discipline and grievances, safety and health and so forth. Many firms are now far more concerned with how to redeploy labour internally and how to train their staff to cope with changes in their products and services. This redeployment and retraining need is likely to increase over the next decade.

These factors will require managers who are more responsive to social and political issues and who are prepared to contribute responsibility to the national debate on such issues. Managers can actually influence the environment in which they operate by taking an active interest in these issues.

TECHNOLOGY AND EMPLOYMENT

Coupled with all the existing gadgetry around, the advent of micro-processors has enormously increased the scope for automation, size reduction and the rapid transfer, transformation and retrieval of information. The new technology will eventually pervade all aspects of our lives. It is used in the home, the office, the workshop, the factory and the warehouse. It is used in our leisure centres, our hospitals, our banks and our high street stores.

The new technology will enable us to manufacture more with less people, to handle more information, to perform more complex calculations rapidly and to control machines which can take over many of the boring, dirty and dangerous jobs. But although there are some areas where the technology is being applied rapidly, there is no evidence that it will suddenly erupt and destroy millions of jobs. Many factors will limit the speed at which the new technology takes over and in some cases there are natural limits to the extent to which mechanical components can be replaced by electronic components, e.g. in motor cars.

Constraints on the rapid introduction of technology include costs of associated hardware and software, design factors and the need to secure negotiated agreements with trade unions. The pace of change should permit the growth of new applications, new products and services, new ways to exploit information and perhaps, new art forms. These developments could be employment generating, provided wealth is produced by the new technology to support these ideas.

This will all involve a lot of re-adjustment with the nature of jobs available changing all the time. People will need to adapt and to learn new skills and acquire new knowledge. The broadly based education and training of young people will need to be supplemented by the adequate provision of opportunities for adults to receive education and training at key periods in their lives. We must become more of a learning society and this is especially true at management levels.

Structural changes in industry will undoubtedly occur as a consequence of technological innovation and competition. The future of the UK will depend to a market degree on the extent to which this new technology is embraced and harnessed, and the way in which the consequent social and industrial relations problems are resolved. The introduction of new technology cannot be entirely painless, but it need not be the disaster some are predicting. Failure to introduce the new technology will assuredly condemn the UK to a lower standard of living and more severe economic, social and industrial relations problems.

Various studies have shown that firms who introduce modern technology in a modest way, e.g. to improve manufacturing methods (e.g. by simple robotics or micro-electronic control systems) or to improve their services or products find that the experience helps to secure their market share and provides a base for more imaginative innovations. The new technology should be seen as an opportunity rather than a threat.

Firms who fail to take cognisance of the new methods are likely to lose market share as other companies reduce costs or improve their products or services. Technology is introduced by people. It does not just happen, and there is a need to invest in skilled people, e.g. engineers, technicians, systems analysts. The population at large are not well versed in technology and this acts as a brake on change.

The European Economic Community offers a huge market for 'telematics' i.e. the whole complex of industries and products concerned with information recording, transmission, storage and retrieval. It is estimated that the EEC countries represent about a quarter of the world market. Yet the Community manufactures only about one-tenth of the products. The community has therefore set itself the task of increasing the manufacture of telematic materials over the next decade to attempt to secure thirty per cent of the world market.

Managers must recognise the political and economic imperatives that arise from the new technology and be prepared to embrace and to manage innovation. One of the keys to success lies in early consultation with the workforce and trade unions. Apart from poor industrial relations the two major obstacles to technological innovation are the fear borne of ignorance and the lack of capital for investment.

An important feature of the industrial scene is the Multi-National

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Companies. This means that investment decisions concerning British plants may well be made overseas. In effect, this ability to export jobs implies that the British labour force must prove itself to be as efficient as overseas workers. Even where British firms do not introduce technology, these multi-national companies will do so.

EUROPEAN ECONOMIC COMMUNITY

Taken together, the Treaty of Rome and the Treaty of Accession govern the United Kingdom's relations with the other member states of the EEC. These treaties give wide powers to the Commission of the European Community, the EEC's Civil Service. This Commission has the responsibility for formulating policies and plans at the Community level. After consultation with the European Assembly (parliament) these policies and plans are submitted to the Council of Ministers. The Council can take note, pass a resolution or pass a Community 'Law' in the form of a Directive or a Regulation. A Directive is binding on member governments who have to amend state law to conform. A Regulation binds both the governments and people of the Community. The Commission also administers the European Social Fund which is used to encourage training and other measures that can improve the labour market situation.

The various 'Directorates' of the Commission operate on virtually every aspect of life at work at home and at leisure - in sickness and in health! Already we in the UK have noticed its influence in agriculture, fishing and heavy goods vehicles. We can expect further major EEC initiatives in the fields of energy, telematics (information technology industry) and social action. At Community level there is serious concern with the employment situation of young people, migrants and women, and the problems associated with industrial restructuring.

It is important to recognise the effect of all the informal meetings that take place between politicians, employers, trade unionists and civil servants. Much of the progress at Community level is achieved outside the formal meetings. There is a strong sense of the inter-dependence of the member states on the part of those who represent their countries and their interest groups at Brussels.

At the European level the need to restructure industries, to identify appropriate markets and products and to accommodate to modern technology is recognised. Our problems in the heavy industries and in mass produc- tion will increase unless we embrace and harness new technology. In some areas modernisation has already occurred and in these areas there has been a shift of demand from semi-skilled workers to technicians and technical supervisors. Although there is a demand for people with various skills at the technician level, the growth at this level of employment is slowing down in most sectors - except telematics. The underlying trend in employment opportunities is away from manufacture and towards servicing. However, high labour costs are leading to more self-service and do-it- yourself activities. The trend in the marketplace is to more automatic control systems and more highly innovative products.

These manifold changes in the structure of industry and the nature of jobs will inevitably give rise to the need for individuals to learn new skills to acquire more knowledge. Much of the training will not be

expensive to provide (e.g. learning how to use a wordprocessor) and will arise out of the normal review of training needs - where this takes place. Unfortunately many firms still fail to undertake any periodic review of training needs and priorities in the light of the changing tasks of the firm. Managers at all levels need to become more aware of the scope for new technology and to lose fear of the unknown which seems to characterise the attitude of many to silicon chips. Qualities of leadership involving intellectual ability and sensitive human relations skills is clearly in demand.

Managers will need to be trained to handle the new craftsmen and technicians who learn to use the new materials and devices and there is a need for capable designers, programmers and systems analysts.

CONCLUSIONS

The context within which managers operate may be in many ways new and different. The challenge is essentially the same - to achieve results through people and material resources. The degree of complexity, change and uncertainty demands, however, managers who approach the job analytically and imaginatively and who learn to integrate doing, managing and learning into a new leadership style.

REFERENCES

BRODIE, M. and BENNETT, R. (eds), 1979, 'Perspectives on Managerial Effectiveness', Thames Valley Regional Management Centre. pp.140.

2 The relevance for managerial effectiveness of my studies of managerial work and behaviour

ROSEMARY STEWART

None of the studies that will be briefly described have directly aimed at studying managerial effectiveness, but their findings have implications for our understanding of it. The studies developed from each other so that it is appropriate to take them in chronological order. My aim is to keep the description of each to a minimum and to concentrate upon the findings that have implications for effectiveness. Brief details of the studies, their finance, duration, methods and staffing are summarised in Appendix 1. The summary of the studies will be followed by a description of the framework for understanding managerial work and behaviour that developed during the later researches, together with an illustration of its application to a particular job. Finally, the conclusions that are relevant to management effectiveness will be summarised.

REVIEW OF THE DIFFERENT STUDIES

1.   Similarities and differences in how managers spend their time
(STEWART, Rosemary, Managers and Their Jobs, Macmillan, 1967)

This consisted of a specially designed diary that 160 middle and senior managers in different industrial organisations kept for four weeks. The managers were in different functions. The aim of the study is given by its title. One of the findings that is relevant to management effectiveness is that many of those who participated said that they found keeping a diary useful in helping them to consider how they worked and in identifying ways in which they could use their time more effectively. Subsequent work with managers on courses has shown that many find it revealing and useful to keep a record of their activities, although some find it impossible to do so. The reason for this difficulty stems from the marked fragmentation of most managerial work, which was also one of the findings of the study.

Another finding, which was explored further in later studies, was the marked differences between jobs in the way in which time is spent. However, this study was limited to when, where, with whom and how managers spent their time. It did not include information about what they did because the pilot study showed that comparable material about that could not be reliably collected by the diary method.