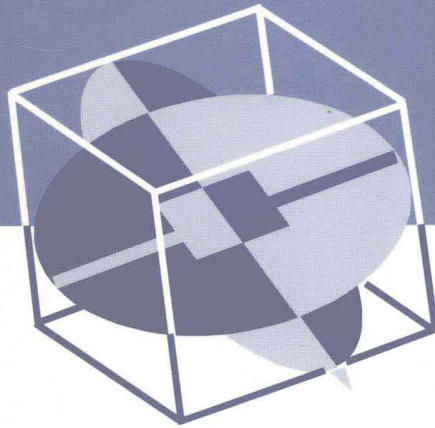# SKILLS *for* MANAGERS *in* ORGANIZATIONS

◄ LAIRD W. MEALIEA ►

SKILLS FOR MANAGERS IN ORGANIZATIONS

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PREFACE

Successful managers must be able to continue both the art and the science of management. This is especially true for new managers who do not have the benefit of long years of experience or the helpful guidance of knowledgeable mentors. Managers who apply only the science of management to their day-to-day experiences, although technically competent, will appear artificial and wooden; their actions will show little sense of timing. Conversely, the manager who attempts to rely exclusively on styles is likely to be lacking in substance. Synergy, and ultimately managerial success, results when both he art and the science components of management are combined to complement one another.

The science of management provides a set of principles, or accumulated knowledge, that can act as a guide to managers in current and future situations. It also provides the basis on which to make accurate managerial decisions. More specifically, the science of management is built on the observations of both theorists and practitioners who, through the experience and studies, have established a set of verifiable general principles. The science of management also provides the linking terminology that allows theorists and practitioners to discuss and develop better ways to manage. Clearly, the existence of a science of management makes it unnecessary for individuals to recreate what is already available.

Unfortunately, students can frequently receive high grades on theory tests but then fail to apply what they have learned to the real world. Along with understanding the science of management, students must be given the opportunity to develop the art of management. The art of management refers to the manager's style and the ease with which he or she behaves in real-world situations. This book, and the experience it offers students, attempts to bring the dynamics of the real world into the classroom. The book's material is designed to supplement management and organizational behavior texts that place primary emphasis on theory and not on real-world encounters. It can also be used independently of any text if the instructor personally provides the theory and practical background to breathe life into classroom discussions and activities.

Such hands-on experiences increase the likelihood that management education received in the classroom will be reflected in future behavior on the job. The exercises, cases, role plays, group discussions, and projects that are used reflect what is necessary for managerial success in the 1990s and beyond. Traditional topics covered include the manager's role, common management errors, interpersonal sensitivity, assertiveness, communications, situational leadership, delegation, goal setting, decision making, meetings, innovation and change, conflict management, performance evaluation, training and development, and counseling. The exercises provided also fill management education needs not adequately covered in other texts. Students will therefore be exposed to exercises dealing with globalization, total quality management, quality circles, sexual harassment, followership, negotiations, behavior modeling, and ethics. The text has been divided into nine sections, each dealing with a common theme or area. This has been done to provide structure to the 76 exercises.

The test's design permits instructors to use material in a way that best reflects their own teaching style and that will benefit the type of students enrolled in their courses. A large number and variety

of exercises have been provided, allowing the instructor to use class time exclusively as a learning opportunity to practice the theory of management. For those instructors who prefer to devote classroom time to a discussion of theory, it is possible to use many of the exercises for homework assignments. Exercises are also designed to be partially completed at home, allowing for both theoretical and practical discussions during class time. In the case of multiple sections of the same course, the number of exercises also makes it possible to use different exercises in each class and thereby minimize exercise contamination among classes. Finally, this text can be used in a wide range of management courses, with each course making use of the particular exercises that fit the content.

Acknowledgments

The efforts of many people have made this text possible. I would like to think the many graduate and undergraduate students at Dalhousie University who have helped me test and fine-tune the material presented in this text. Colleagues at Dalhousie's School of Business have also been helpful in breathing life into many of the exercises. Sincere thanks also go to the many clients who have invited me into their organizations as a human resource consultant, providing me with real-world situations on which to build many of the exercises. I would like to thank my brother, Wallace L. Mealiea, a well-published clinical psychologist, for acting as a constant resource and critic. His input has been invaluable to ensure the theoretical accuracy of the material presented. With sincere appreciation, I would also like to thank my wife, Barbara, for her insight into real-world organizational problems and for her efforts in editing the many exercises found in this text. Finally, I would like to thank Milton Vachon of Richard D. Irwin, Inc., for his help in getting this book into print.

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2. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE DURING THE FIRST SIX MONTHS ON THE JOB

Very often, the most difficult transition for a new manager occurs during the first six months on the job. If the new employee does not perform well, take the initiative, or demonstrate value to the organization, management may question the wisdom of hiring the individual. Although the pressure is on the new employee to perform, he or she will most often ask, "What should I do first?" This exercise is designed to give you an opportunity to think through what your answer should be to this question and how best to approach the first six months on the job. Please follow the steps outlined below.

Step 1.   Students will form small groups of five to six individuals. They should select one member of the group to act as group spokesperson.

Step 2.   Read individually the background material presented below.

Step 3.   Through group discussion, develop a list of 12 to 15 recommendations to guide newly hired managers. These guidelines should act as a road map for what the new manager should or should not do when taking over a department. Try to be as imaginative and specific as possible. To breath life into your discussion, feel free to make additional assumptions about the new job and organization for which you will be working. The only constraint is that the assumptions must be realistic and consistent with the jobs for which graduate business students are typically hired.

Step 4.   At the end of 40 minutes, one or more groups will present their lists. Each group will be provided with overhead transparencies and felt-tip overhead markers . After group lists have been discussed, they will be compared to the experts' list.

You have 40 minutes to develop your list and prepare for the forthcoming presentation.

BACKGROUND

Assume that you are L. Timmons. You have a degree from a well-known business school and have just been hired by a rapidly growing organization located in the Northeast. You will have 12 subordinates reporting to you. Your department's primary task is to do research to update a database that your company sells to both government and private industry. The position you are filling is not a new one and your staff have been with the organization an average of five years. You soon discover that you would like to change some activities and procedures in your department. Top management has also hinted that your predecessor was transferred in part because he could not manage effectively or get things done. You can assume that no specific problems need to be solved immediately; there are no crises.

3. UNDERSTANDING THE MANAGER'S ROLE

The success of managers very often depends on understanding what is expected of them by the organization, other managers, and subordinates. This understanding is also critical when attempting to define personal expectations, organizational needs, and potential areas of development. Since many students will become managers, take the time to articulate what you believe to be appropriate managerial roles. Please follow the steps outlined below.

Step 1.   The class will form small groups of five to six individuals each.

Step 2.   Through group discussion, develope a list of behaviors and responsibilities that clearly define the manager's job. When developing your list of behaviors and responsibilities, consider the managers short-term and long-term horizon. If individuals in your group are currently manager's, ask what they are doing now and what they would like to do in the future. If you are not a manager but currently employed, consider what your employer might need or expect from your immediate superior. Do not list specific types of tasks performed by managers (e.g., completing personnel reports). Instead list the general types of behaviors or responsibilities that describe a manager's role. (Step 2 should take approximately 30 minutes.)

Step 3.   From its list of behaviors and responsibilities, each group will determine the five that it believes are most important. Your reduced list should be ranked 1 through 5 with 1 indicating the most critical, 2 the next most important, to 5 the least critical. (Step 3 should take approximately 30 minutes.)

Step 4.   The class will assemble and discuss group results.

4. IDENTIFYING AND PREVENTING NEW MANAGER ERRORS: THREE MINI CASES

New managers are often asked to fill supervisory positions without any formal training or guidance. As a result, they develop a managerial style based on their own personalities, and personal theories about appropriate managerial behavior, or they rely on experience as a guide to their actions. Unfortunately, this philosophy increases the likelihood that new managers will make basic errors as they attempt to become effective managers. The lucky few will make the right choices early or quickly learn from their mistakes. Others will develop an ineffective management style that they will carry with them throughout their managerial careers. This exercise points out some of the basic errors that new managers can make and helps develop a style to prevent their occurrence. Please follow the steps outlined below.

Step 1.   Read Case Study 1 to yourself and answer the two questions presented at the end. Write your answer in the space provided.

Step 2.   The professor will lead a discussion of student responses and help clarify the errors made by the new supervisor.

Step 3.   Repeat Steps 1 and 2 for the remaining two case studies.

CASE STUDY I
TOM ADAMS

Tom has recently been promoted to day supervisor for the electrical department. His promotion was well received by everyone in the department. Tom was clearly recognized as the best electrical technician in the generating plant. When others could not solve a problem, Tom was often called, and the gauge, pump, or terminal was soon working again.

In addition, Tom is a conscientious and responsible young man of 25, who is personally acceptable to most people and has no problem interacting with co-workers or management. Tom was pleased with the promotion and believed that it was proper recognition for his technical skills and strong performance over the years.

In the generating plant, technicians float throughout the facility working on problems and checking equipment. As a result, there is little interaction between the supervisor of the electrical unit and subordinates unless a problem arises or work is being assigned. Recently, a number of people in the electrical group have complained that Tom is hard to reach because he's out working on a tough job. Last week the union filed a grievance that Tom was doing production work. Tom was very disturbed and angry not only at the grievance but also with the suggestion by his boss, the maintenance superintendent, that he should make himself more readily available to all his staff throughout the day.

Tom couldn't see why everyone was making such a big fuss about his behavior. He had long believed that supervisors and subordinates were part of the same team. As long as the equipment was kept running and customers received their power, it shouldn't matter who provided the effort . Tom put it this way, "If I'm out in the plant and I see a gauge out of adjustment, it is easier for me to fix it than to find one of my crew to do it. That's what I've been trained to do for five years. And this business of not being available --what do they expect of a guy? After all, I can only be in one place at a time and some of these jobs take a lot of time to fix. Besides, I've been reading up on all the equipment in the generating plant and, if need be, I can now fix just about anything."

What is Tom's problem?   **What does he need to do?**

CASE STUDY II
LARRY BENTON

Larry Benton was recently promoted to the position of shift foreman, a promotion to which he had looked forward for several years. Larry had taken several company workshops to increase his chances for such a promotion. Before being selected, he had assured himself that he would be a fair supervisor and not forget his friends. As supervisor, he saw no reason not to continue the same level of social interaction with his co-workers and at first this appeared to be the case.

However, as time passed Benton began to feel less and less accepted by subordinates he considered his close friends. They were less willing to talk with him, less open, and on several occasions failed to invite him to planned activities. He especially missed the after-hours rap sessions at the local tavern. At the same time, he believed that his subordinates had attempted on several occasions to take advantage of their past friendship. For example, there appeared to be an increase in (a) the number of sick days, (b) extended lunch hours and coffee breaks, and (c) the use of co-workers to punch in and out of work.

To determine what the problem might be, Larry reviewed in his mind the events of the past several months. Although he had disciplined several subordinates since his promotion he considered these actions fair because he had gone to great lengths to give the employees more than one chance to correct their behavior. However, in each instance the problem became worse. The only other issue of significance that he recalled was the change in vacation time forced upon him by top management. Several of Larry's subordinates had to reschedule their vacations because someone in sales had over committed the company on an order. He had tried to explain what had happened and why the changes in vacations were necessary but his subordinates didn't seem to appreciate his efforts.

Larry confided to his wife that he was thinking about asking for his old job back. He concluded that he had been happier prior to the promotion.

What is Larry's problem?   **What does he need to do?**

CASE STUDY III
DAVE SAMSON

Dave Samson has worked for Seabright Manufacturing for 20 years. He has been a hard worker but has always wondered why he was never given an opportunity to lead one of the work crews in the Highland plant. Some people considered Dave bullheaded, but the thought crossed Dave's mind that he had not been promoted because he was African-American. To make himself more marketable, Dave took training courses offered by the company. Recently, the company Dave's wife works for offered to transfer her to Centerville, a move that was attractive not only because of an increase in pay for his wife, but also because a large city offered more options. As fate would have it, Dave noticed an opening for a foreman's job in Seabright's Centerville manufacturing facility, which also houses the company's head office. Dave applied for the job and was surprised when he got it, because it was a promotion.

Before discussing Dave's move to Centerville, a brief description of the Highland facility is warranted. The Highland plant is located in a rural area approximately 450 miles from Centerville. The area around the Highland plant traditionally experiences a higher rate of unemployment than other areas in the region. The average percentage of unemployed in the Highland area runs about three percent to five percent higher than in Centerville. As a result, turnover at the Highland plant is very low. Low turnover and poor economic conditions have also resulted in an average tenure of 27.5 years for plant personnel.

The Highland facility is known for labor management confrontations and is the only Seabright facility to have experienced two wildcat strikes. In addition, the plant manager, a former military officer, is well known for his harsh and arbitrary treatment of plant workers. One story tells of his meeting with new employees. When they entered his office, he told them to role up their sleeves and put one fist in a bucket of water. After they removed their hands from the bucket the plant manager asked, "Do you see any difference?" When the new employees said no, the plant manager angrily replied, "Well that's the difference you'll make to this plant if I fire you, so if you foul up once, I'll kick you out of here!"

A recent incident also describes the type of environment found at Highland. Before leaving for a training session in Centerville, Dave was approached by Frank, his supervisor. Frank stated that Dave should realize that what they were going to teach him was nonsense and that he didn't want Dave bringing any of it back to the Highland plant.

In this environment, employees typically performed at a minimum level and constantly tried to find ways of getting back at management. Such retaliation often came in the form of slowdowns, grievances against management for any breach of contract, high absenteeism, and wildcat strikes. The environment had become so confrontational that employees could not go into a closed management office unless they were accompanied by the shop steward.

Before leaving for Centerville Dave told one of his close friends that he had a good idea what management wanted from their foreman, but didn't know if he could be that tough with his crew. At least he wouldn't know any of them in Centerville. Sure, head office publicly called for managers to be understanding and take the needs of employees into consideration, but that was public relations stuff to keep the unions off their backs. Dave knew what management really wanted, and if he had to

be tough he would be. The bottom line was that Dave was finally getting a chance to show management what he could do.

After several weeks on the job in Centerville, Dave's crew was ready to mutiny. The conversation after work at the local tavern often centered on Dave's arbitrary and ruthless leadership style. Everyone in the crew felt that Dave had taken a good work environment and turned it into a prison-like environment. Dave was also becoming well known for his temper and periodic raids on the lavatory and cafeteria in an attempt to find out who on his crew was goofing off. The relationship between Dave and his crew had deteriorated to the point where they were now referring to him as "DT" (Dave the Terrible). In addition, two crew members asked the union to initiate personal harassment grievances against Dave.

Management at the Centerville plant was becoming increasingly aware of the problem with Dave and had spoken with him on several occasions. However, these talks appeared to have little positive impact on his behavior. If anything, they made him push the crew harder. Management didn't want to fire Dave for fear that it would look as if they were discriminating against him as a member of the African-American minority. Nevertheless, something had to be done quickly to save the situation.

What is Dave's problem?   **What does he need to do?**

5.   ADJUSTING TO CULTURAL DIFFERENCES IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

Given the wide range of cultures, values, attitudes, and acceptable behaviors that currently exist among countries, it is not hard to imagine nationals from the parent company engaging in behavior abroad that might offend or otherwise confuse individuals from the host country. A first step in minimizing the occurence of problems is for all employees to take the host country's culture into consideration when working in a foreign country. This exercise is designed to help students bring this need into better focus. Please follow the steps outlined below.

Step 1.   The class will break up into small groups of five to six individuals each.

Step 2.   Read independently the first scenario presented below. After all group members have read Scenario 1, each small group will discuss how the employee should act. (10 – 15 minutes)

Step 3.   The class will assemble and discuss group recommendations. (10 – 15 minutes)

Step 4.   Repeat Steps 2 and 3 for the remaining scenarios.

SCENARIO 1

Bob Frederick, an American, has recently received his MBA degree. He also has an undergraduate degree in chemical engineering. After taking a job with Eastern Oil, Bob was assigned to manage an oil distribution center in a Middle Eastern country. He had never been to the Middle East before his final meeting with the owners of the company. Bob does, however, have five years' experience working in the oil industry in the southeastern United States.

Because of the location of the oil distribution center, the host company had a difficult time hiring a manager from North America. However, it did want someone in the position who was from the West and could interact easily with European and North American representatives. Four technical assistants and one support person are reporting to Bob. All five are nationals of the host country and all speak fluent English. Bob has been on the job for about three months.

To increase the efficiency of all departments, the decision was made to computerize the process of distribution and customer billing for the center. Through informal discussions, Bob learns that the two younger technical support people (ages 26 and 24), already are computer literate. Two older technical support people (ages 57 and 61) are not; both have been with the host company for 20 years and are comfortable with the manual system. Bob is concerned that these two individuals cannot adapt easily to the new technology. Despite his concerns, Bob introduces the new system.

One of the older employees readily accepted the change and has no difficulty learning to use the new computers and the accompanying software. The second, the older of the two, refuses to use the new system and makes every effort to point out why it won't work or why it is inappropriate for the type of work being done. Bob has tried several times with very little impact to talk things over with the employee. The situation worsens each time Bob talks to the resistant employee. It also appears that the employee's behavior is having a negative impact on the entire staff.

1. How would you view this situation as a North American manager dealing with North American workers?

2. How do you think the answer to question 1 would differ if you were a North American manager in the Middle East?

3. How should Bob respond to the older employee who is resisting the change?