

MANAGING
ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

GIBSON



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IN MANAGEMENT AND THE BEHAVIORAL SCIENCES

MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR

**Achieving results through
understanding and action**

CYRUS F. GIBSON

Vice President
Index Systems, Inc.
Formerly Associate Professor
Graduate School of Business Administration
Harvard University

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MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR
Achieving results through understanding and action

The Irwin Series in Management and The Behavioral Sciences

L. L. Cummings and E. Kirby Warren *Consulting Editors*

John F. Mee *Advisory Editor*

For Joanne, Kate, Tim, and Philip

PREFACE

The field of organizational behavior is bewilderingly diverse, as any teacher who has searched the literature to design a course and any manager who has sought helpful guides for practice will testify.

Over the last five years I have been in the position of both the teacher and the manager. First, as a teacher I designed and taught a course in organizational behavior for a particularly exciting group of students: middle-level managers, mostly in their 30s, in the 14-week Program for Management Development at the Harvard Business School. More recently, as a manager in a consulting firm, I felt the pressing need for ideas to help define and solve problems of work behavior so that results follow. This book is the product of that five-year odyssey.

As a teacher and academic I came to find some comfort with the various concepts and models of the subfields of organizational behavior, such as work-group theory, interpersonal relations, motivation, individual psychology, and organization structure, but was uneasy about how useful they were. As a manager, I found how incessant is the barrage of data on results and behavior. It does not come packaged to fit a concept or model. The book represents an effort to organize the field of organizational behavior within a broad conceptual framework and to provide guidelines for applying this so that data may be sifted and ordered and a process of problem defining and action taking can occur.

The primary organizing dimension of the book is conceptual, the secondary one is action taking. Each part and each chapter deal with topics covered (to a greater or lesser degree) by the literature in organiza-

tional behavior. Within each chapter the treatment deals first with concepts and models and then with practical implications and guidelines.

Part I is a presentation and elaboration of the overview model. The basic model is in the tradition of the sociotechnical school. It is elaborated upon as a framework for different forms of managerial influence and to account for the importance of organizational processes as well as static concepts. The action-oriented aspect of Part I is largely an approach to problem diagnosis using the overview model.

All the subsequent Parts, II through VI, build on key elements and processes in the overview model in Part I. The sequence is from the objective, structural, and global aspects of organization toward the subjective, people-specific, and individual aspects. Thus, Part II deals with the design and implementation of formal structure. Part III deals with work groups and managerial groups. Part IV deals with interpersonal relationships. Parts V and VI deal with individual issues in both the management of other individuals and of oneself. The cases have been selected and placed in each part so that the concepts of the preceding chapter or chapters in that part have particular relevance to their understanding and solution.

It should be possible for the reader to fit his or her knowledge and experience within the overview model. Indeed, the experienced manager and the academician may find little that is conceptually new in the model itself. With such an all-inclusive model presented first, subsequent topics are a selection from the population of topics and cases which could have been taken up. For example, in Part II the focus is on formal structure, leaving out detailed treatment of administrative systems, technology, and strategy, all of which are elements in the overview model. The selection and elimination was based partly on what appeared to me to be the most important topics for managers today, and, inevitably, what I was most interested in and familiar with.

Despite the effort to provide coherence and order conceptually, the stance and treatment of topics has wide variation. There is, first of all, a deliberate juxtaposition in each chapter of descriptive treatment of the literature and prescriptive advice on how to do something in practice. Beyond that, however, the reader will find variation between pure acceptance of others' research and critique of research, and between critique and opinion. Part III and Part VI, on managerial politics and individual integrity, are particularly susceptible to the accusation that they represent the author's opinion more than documented fact, and so they do.

I trust that editorializing will be recognized when it crops up, and that selectivity of topics and variation in stance and treatment will contribute to the reader's debating and filtering what is here so that what is useful becomes integrated into his or her own perspective.

Acknowledgments

Although written in the singular, this book owes direct and indirect attribution to many others.

The substance of many chapters and cases was either initially written or thoroughly revised by colleagues at the Harvard Business School. In particular, Chapter 9 is a modest revision of a piece by John Gabarro. Pierre du Jardin and Margaret Lawrence wrote early drafts of most of Part III. Many of the concepts in Chapter 5 are based on a piece by Jay Lorsch. Renato Taguiri provided insightful suggestions on several chapters. Tony Athos contributed ideas and a personal model of care and attention to the student perspective on material.

The single greatest inspiration and influence on the book came from over a thousand students in Harvard's "Program for Management Development," sessions PMD29 through PMD34, and in the summer course, "Managing the Computer Resource." Their reactions in class to cases and chapters sent me back to the drawing board many times. Their sense of what was important to them and how they best learned was translated into criteria for selection and sequencing of topics.

Similarly, my colleagues at Index Systems, Inc., have unwittingly shaped much of the final revision. I owe special thanks to Tom Gerrity, president of Index, for encouraging me to finish the book on company time. Help in typing and editing came from Erica Davis, Krista Page, Frank Leonard, Jane Bass, Joan Homar, Alex Henry, Margo Clay, Laurie McEachern, Deborah Mayhew, and Jay Talbott. I am grateful to all of them.

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February 1980

Cyrus F. Gibson

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**Models of organizational
results, behavior,
and influence**

What causes people to behave the way they do at work? How much does a manager really need to know about the causes of human behavior in order to be effective in achieving good organizational results? How can a manager get results through people? What are the limits on what a manager can do?

In Part I we address these questions. To do so we shall develop and elaborate an overview model of the causes of organizational results. Basically the model shows input elements and emergent relationships as determining the nature of individuals' *perspectives* in a work situation. An individual's perspective is the key antecedent of his or her behavior in organizations and behavior, in turn, is the most important cause of organizational results. The elements in this model can serve as a checklist of things a manager should look at in understanding the origins of forces and behavior which lead to results and in understanding the constraints on and channels for those forces.

In its development in Chapter 1 the model will be static. In Chapter 2 one kind of process dimension is added to the model, namely the process of managerial influence. Influence efforts will be defined in terms of what elements of the overview model they are aimed at. That is, whether the influence is direct on behavior, or semidirect or indirect, through causes of behavior.

In Chapter 3 another kind of process dimension is added. This refers to forces that occur naturally in organizations over time and which require management effort to control.

Throughout Part I and the book we shall concentrate on elements and forces which affect results and which the practicing manager can use to achieve desirable results.

The Ford-Knudsen case (Case 3-1) at the end of Part I is taken exclusively from published news articles. It illustrates virtually all the concepts and processes described in Chapters 1, 2 and 3.

MANAGING ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR: AN OVERVIEW MODEL

In the literature on management and the manager, academicians and practitioners offer a variety of definitions of the management task.¹ A common theme is that management involves having responsibility for the achievement of some intended organizational ends or outcomes—that is, for getting results which meet or exceed performance expectations. Achieving results is of particular importance to the practicing manager in an organization. In this chapter we shall develop an overview model to explain how results come about. Our purpose is to provide a useful framework for practicing managers by drawing on a necessary minimum of concepts from academicians in organizational behavior.

In developing the overview model we shall focus initially on organizational results or *ends* rather than on the *means* of obtaining ends or on the processes which lead to them. In doing so our approach differs from that of many authors in the field of management and organizational behavior. For example, the traditional approach to management, as articulated by Fayol (1950), Gulick (1937), and others, emphasized the functions performed by management, such as planning, organizing, staffing, directing, and controlling. A more contemporary approach is that of Mintzberg (1973), who studied empirically

¹ For a thorough review of definitions of management, see Albanese (1975).

the behavior of managers at work and derived a set of concepts to describe ten roles managers fill, such as those of leader, liaison, entrepreneur, disturbance handler, and so on. None of these approaches denies the importance of results, and none is really incompatible with the others. They are basically different ways of conceptualizing managerial behavior in terms of the means by which managers strive to achieve results such as their personal ends and organizational ends. We shall also deal with means and processes, but we begin with results and we shall select concepts which are most relevant to explain how results come about.

Our emphasis on results is largely because our primary audience is intended to be practicing managers and managers in training. Our contact with managers in teaching executives, consulting, and doing field research leaves us with the distinct impression that achieving organizational results is uppermost in their minds. They are concerned much more with solving problems, that is, with correcting and improving performance results, than they are with purely understanding or theorizing about what causes their problems or about *why*, descriptively, things happen the way they do in their organizations. To put this another way, managers are more interested in information that is *prescriptive* or *normative* than information that is explanatory or *descriptive*. They have personal perspectives of performance and needs to use knowledge for action. For example, managers want to know how to get sales up, how to stop and reverse a decline in output per day, or how to "put out a fire" or smooth a crisis rather than to know why the situation is what it is. The knowledge of why is of interest to them only if it helps them decide what to do; knowledge beyond what is needed to reach a satisfactory solution is often considered superfluous. Nevertheless, many if not most managers need to understand more about these problems than they typically do in order to solve them quickly and permanently.

Behavioral scientists, by training and inclination, are—and probably ought to be—more interested in descriptive information of why organizations and the people within them behave the way they do. They are less interested in how to influence that behavior to achieve results. Theirs is a perspective of observation, contemplation, and knowledge building. Clearly, behavioral scientists and managers need each other. Ultimately, the behavioral scientist's work must have application in the world of action to be useful, and he or she should understand the manager's perspective in order to understand how organizations function. The manager's action can be improved in achieving its intentions if it is based on an improved understanding of what causes behavior and organizational results.

It is for the purpose of helping the manager that we begin with the topic of results and with the overview model of causes. Here we have a