

# Management Ideas



**FOR STILL BETTER**

**RESULTS**

**RELATIONS**

**REPUTATION**

a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders  
on practices, possibilities and ideas generally  
for stepped up performance

edited by

N. H. ATTHREYA MA PhD

author, educator & consultant

on problem-solving and creative ideas

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MANAGING  
FOR  
EXCELLENCE:

*We reproduce in this issue three more units from  
Dr.H.N.Nanjundiah on the theme of **Managing for Excellence**:*

**Managing The Managing Process:** The Managerial Action System is the means of shaping and attaining the mission and purpose of an enterprise, in the context of given socio-economic settings. And it always happens to be a changing setting. The Managing style and system need to subsume:

a. the forces in the environment and what they may hold for fulfilling the chosen purposes of the enterprise through relevant business development & marketing strategies;

b. the manufacturing system with its technology, process, facilities and manpower mix, with due regard to quality, productivity and timely deliveries;

c. the capital structure to finance the growing operations with an eye on the productivity and cost of capital; and

d. the human organisation and the ever-changing manpower mix.

To be sure, these happen to be the four cardinal sub-systems of the Managing System in all enterprises.

Management connotes a variety of concepts and disciplines such as those related to the different business functions of an enterprise, each with an associated specialised field of knowledge and expertise. They bear on the quality, output, economy & efficiency with which the results are obtained in their respective fields of operation. And they in turn depend helplessly on the behavioural attitudes and motivations of people who are assigned the various tasks to perform. Therein lies the true role of the practice of HRM by every Manager who is in anyway responsible for the work of others. Managing the Human Resource thus differentiates itself from all other functions, but common to all of them in practice.

Managing thus means managing nothing but the human resource. In the final analysis, the tasks bearing on all other Management functions eventually boil down to some or other form of human intervention. Each such human intervention is an element in the process of Managing the Human Resource by the respective managers in the human organisation. The jobs, tasks, responsibilities, contributions, perspectives, basics, roles, levels, personalities, competence, process & styles of managing must hence become the critical areas of concern and in-depth study in an ongoing manner.

The Key Result Areas (KRAs) to be kept track of are often seen as the basic jobs of managers. To be sure, the KRAs must be attained at acceptable levels, as evidence of a managing job well done. It must, however, be noted that, at the back of each activity resulting in the attainment of KRAs, there exists, and has to exist, one or another form of human intervention. The managing job hence does not lie in the KRAs as such, but in the practice of HRM to result in the attainment of KRAs as planned.

**Managing The Managing System:** Management Systems are specific to the culture and the socio-economic development stage and phase of a nation. There can be no beneficial transplant of the management system of some other nation or time to the specific conditions prevailing in a given situation. The probability of rejection is much higher, if not total, than in the case of major organ transplants into the human body system. The rejection mechanisms are ever present to instantly negate the transplanted managing ideas and practices. While Management ideas and practices bearing on Managing the Human Resource will prove to be totally incompatible. Hence the inviolable lesson from long-standing Managing experience: "INDIGENISE TECHNOLOGY, but INDIANISE THE POLICIES AND PRACTICES BEARING ON HRM."

This is conclusively proven by the Japanese, in the fact that they Westernised Technology, but preserved, in toto, the

Japanese system of Managing the Human Resource. And that is also in evidence of the fact that the Japanese Management System is not readily applicable to any other managing situation without doing violence to its realities.

The time is yet to come for India to evolve its own managing system: the Indian Managing System (IMS). Being anxious to catch up in a hurry with the developed economies since our Independence, India has tried to import technologies from many different nations. Along with that, the different managing systems are also being slavishly imitated, with little or no visible success. With the result, neither the technologies are being indigenised, nor the managing system is being Indianised. The Indian economy is thus in double jeopardy. Yet, there exist many points of excellence in the traditional IMS, which should not only be preserved, but also made standard practice, without the feeling of being seen as not modern. There is no virtue in simply imitating some alien HRM practices, in the name of being "modern." Indian enterprises need hence take up seriously a corporate communication campaign in favour of propagating an IMS, in the true spirit of the traditional Indian value systems, which would then foster the genuine practice of indigenising borrowed technology and Indianising the practice of managing the human resource.

Excellence in IMS lies in adapting whatever one can learn from others in the spirit of the saying: "the best of us have much to learn from the rest of us." Each Manager is obligated to take note of the prevailing state of IMS, especially in the given human organisation, and provide the underpinnings for the evolution and practice of a genuine IMS.

**Managing For Betterment:** Managing for Excellence starts with the notion of integrity in the product and services an enterprise chooses to offer. It is followed through the design process for manufacturability and ease of commercialisation. The state of technology, even when it is borrowed from other places and times, will have to be continuously adapted, updated and innovated from the standpoints of its relevance to and compatibility with the stage and phase of the development of the economy. Imitation is not the route to excellence. Technology needs to be developed, absorbed and transferred to the place of work and to the people at work, with focus on listening to the Voice of the Customer and configuring the facilities & the human resource so as to be able to match the Voice of the Process with the Voice of the Customer, in an unflinching manner.

The Quality System aimed at sponsoring the Zero Defect mode of human performance has to be rooted in a quality culture, evolved from within the organisation and the practice of Managing Total Performance. To be sure, Quality is the outcome of human behaviour and performance. Every bit of human intervention and attention must bear the stamp of commitment to the practice of zero defect behaviour. Quality has no absolute standard, like

other similar concepts such as truth, beauty or justice. One has to go on improving the present level of quality, day after day, year after year, in the incremental improvement mode, true to the spirit of the saying: "It connotes a journey and not a destination."

In ongoing physical or human behavioural operations, there would always exist or arise problems and bottlenecks which tend to limit performance and results to the actuals of yesterday, if not to even a lower level. Managing for Excellence would seek every opportunity to resolve human behavioural issues to temper the harshness of chronic problems and bottlenecks in operations, to be able to push performance and results to the levels of the probabilities, the potentialities, and the promise of the distant future. Innovation will thus be seen as working towards a better and different tomorrow, from the present trend of doing more of the same things, in the same manner, as were being done yesterday. It is for each manager to foster the practice of managing for excellence through the practice of managing human behaviour and performance in the genuinely innovative and zero defect mode.

3571  
A  
SOURCE  
BOOK:

The hottest feature of the Internet is the World Wide Web, a user-friendly, multimedia subset of the Net that allows links between related Web sites, so that browsers can jump between sites at different ends of the world with a single click.

A lot of people find surfing the Web fun, but it's not always an effective way to find a specific site which is why Las Vegas-based Jamsa Press has published a book and CD called **World Wide Web Directory**. It lists 8,000 of the most stable Web sites, as well as how to find specific information.

The company looked at 15,000 sites and chose the most stable - those most likely to be around in a year - such as corporate, university, government and media sites. The book/CD package retails for \$40 (U.S.). The company expects to sign a Canadian distributor soon; for now, it can be ordered at 1-800-432-4112 or by E-mail to ordersjamsa.com.

Coming next month from Jamsa: a CD of the 1,001 most stable "Really Cool Web Sites," including those with live video connections or bleeding-edge graphics.

Candidates for When In ROM can be sent to Geoffrey Rowan, at grcwan @GlobeAndMail.ca.

*This time the success story is from U.S.A. It is the story of the Xerox Palo Alto Research Center.*

3572  
A SUCCESS  
STORY:

A computer research manager at Microsoft Corp. was recently contemplating how to spur greater creativity in his group when he hit upon a most unlikely solution: beanbag chairs. These quintessentially "70s pieces of leisure furniture were the seats of choice during the most remarkable run of inventive brilliance

the computer industry had ever seen, he reasoned, and perhaps, to paraphrase a famous sneaker commercial, "it's the chairs."

Not surprisingly, the Microsoft beanbags were soon stacked in a dusty corner. But the originals, where the researchers at Xerox's Palo Alto Research Center sat as they tossed around technical ideas that were to change the world, are now on display at the Smithsonian Institution.

As Xerox PARC opens its 25th anniversary celebration today Microsoft and the other companies that are now leading the information technology revolution would do well to take heed of the real secrets of PARC's success. For in the course of just a few years, PARC scientists came up with three seminal innovations, each of which has proven central to the contemporary computer industry: the graphical user interface, the laser printer, and the Ethernet computer network.

And even though it appears that the contemporary technology industry is spitting forth innovations at a furious pace, it is actually heavily reliant on fundamental inventions that are several decades old. Many fear that cutbacks in funding for basic research, on the part of both government and industry, will ultimately stall the industry's progress.

What made PARC possible was, in the first instance, a company wealthy and confident enough to sponsor basic research—an increasingly rare commodity in the hyper-competitive cost-cutting 1990s. And Xerox was also wise enough to give its researchers a broad but tangible goal: Invent the office of the future.

Another critical factor, naturally enough, was some exceptionally brilliant scientists. But perhaps most important of all was extraordinary group chemistry, a way of working collectively that rendered the whole greater than its already great parts. Much of the credit for that must go to an exceptional manager: Bob Taylor, a football loving Texan whose master's degree was not in computer science but in psychology.

"Lots of labs hire really good people," notes Gordon Bell, the legendary designer of the VAX minicomputer and now a researcher at Microsoft. "What was different at PARC was that you had the whole lab working on one project. This is something that's very hard to do....Universities don't train people to work together. They work in isolation on one piece of problem."

The irony of PARC's achievements is that Xerox had no idea what to do with the labs' innovations. Many of the scientists, after realizing that Xerox was allowing their inventions to languish, walked out to start their own companies. Xerox, which did not hold patents or copyrights on the technology, could do little to stop them. And it was not until Apple launched the Macintosh computer did PARC's biggest ideas find expression in a product.

There were some bitter feelings toward Xerox at the time, but today most of the scientists are nostalgic about their PARC years. Time, and the fortunes that many have made off their PARC inventions, have done much to fade any negative memories.

"It was wonderful," said Bob Metcalfe, who went on to found networking vendor 3Com Corp. and is today editorial director for Infoworld Publishing, a division of International Data Corp. "I got paid much better than I would have if I had taken a job at a university. If I had to travel for a business meeting I flew first class, and I was given all the equipment I would ever need to do my work. Best of all, I got to work with other geniuses."

PARC got its start in 1970 when Xerox, rolling in cash from its monopoly on the copier business, decided to try to develop a longterm view of where its business might be going. It decided to establish a new research facility in Silicon Valley, near Stanford University and UC Berkeley and far from the potentially stultifying Xerox bureaucracy in Stamford, Conn. There were actually three separate labs a computer science lab, a general science lab, and a systems research lab for software development but the computer science lab quickly established itself as the jewel.

To lead the effort, Xerox found an unlikely character in Taylor. He had been a manager with the Defense Department's Advanced Research Projects Administration, itself something of a font of innovation, and thus knew many of the leading computer scientists in the country.

Taylor had a remarkable knack for finding good people. Many of his early hires are industry legends such as Alan Kay, today an Apple research fellow; Butler Lampson, a senior researcher at Microsoft, and Chuck Thacker, a senior researcher for Digital Equipment Corp. They all shared the vision of a computer for individuals that would also allow their owners to collaborate with others in the workplace.

Eventually the lab numbered some 70 researchers, all of them reporting directly to Taylor. They thought of him, if not as a father, then as a big brother. "When I got hired at Xerox, I didn't have a green card," says Hungarian emigre Charles Simonyi, now a researcher at Microsoft. "Bob helped me with the immigration people. He taught me how to play touch football. . . He thought of me as more than a computing resource."

"It was odd that he became the spiritual leader. He had come from University of Texas or some damn place like that," says Harvard alumnus Metcalfe. "But he would do anything for you."

"Most of the people in the lab weren't comfortable in social settings, myself included" he continues. "Bob was gregarious, a real people person. He hosted these parties and made us feel comfortable, and maybe we were grateful to him for that."

But Taylor was anything but a dictatorial boss: All decisions were made at the lab's weekly "dealer" meetings, where researchers presented their ideas to their colleagues. Taylor called them "dealers," because, as in poker, the dealer sets the ground rules for the game--or in this case, the discussion.

At the dealers, the audience was encouraged to challenge the speaker--a seemingly simple format that other companies have tried, with little success, to re-create. At chip giant Intel Corp., for example, they've coined the term constructive confrontation, which often turns meetings into battlegrounds in which warring employees can attack one another publicly. At PARC, since there was little advantage in attacking a peer, it rarely happened.

"These people were really archnerds," says PARC alumnus Mike Schroeder, now a researcher at Digital Equipment Corp. "All they cared about was technology, not whether or not they got a good office."

"Peer review has to be fair, and it has to attack ideas rather than the individual," Taylor said. "Even so, when people would come and visit us from Xerox corporate, they would be shocked at the way we talked to one another because we were so frank."

The sessions served to weed out flawed projects and kept scientists updated on their colleagues' work.

It also strengthened the group's esprit de corps. Dealers were used for hiring: Candidates presented their research to the group, which was then able to ask questions. "When I interviewed, one of the scientists fell asleep, and I was crushed," says Chuck Geschke, a former PARC researcher who is now president of Adobe Systems. "I later found out that he had been up for 36 hours."

Most remember the sessions as intellectually invigorating. "Although they could be perceived as confrontational, they really weren't," says Adele Goldberg, now chairman of software maker ParcPlace Systems. "It was more like, Hey you've talked about something really interesting, let's get into it more deeply. To this day, if I give a presentation and everyone applauds politely at the end of it, I think that something's wrong--I've bored them."

But not all thrived in the spotlight. "There are some people in the world--some good people--who couldn't adapt to the abrasive style that was practiced," Lampson admits. "Those people didn't last."

PARC's biggest problems came when it tried to communicate its vision to parent Xerox. The feeling on the part of the researchers was that the brilliance of their work spoke for itself, and they saw no need to sell their ideas to corporate.

Geschke remembers a technology exposition held by PARC researchers for Xerox's top management in 1977 that proved to be a foreshadowing of fractious relations between its spirited lab and Xerox's staid executives.

"We had brought all our equipment to Boca Raton, where Xerox management was holding a company wide meeting," Geschke recalls. "We set it up for them. I could tell within minutes that they didn't understand. It was in their body language: Their arms were folded tightly across their chests, and there were scowls on their faces."

By the late 1970s, Xerox, facing competition in its copier business from the Japanese, began to feel that PARC was a luxury it could not afford, and the budget began to get squeezed. In 1983, Taylor, who was perceived as caring about PARC at the expense of the parent company, was eased out. Today, PARC's work is mostly conventional applied research focusing on the copier business: only 20% of the research is now open-ended.

"The business pressures have forced all of us to do a little less basic research," says Bob Spinrad, vice president of technology strategy at PARC. PARC inventions, of course, live on. Apple co-founder Steven Jobs was perhaps the most important popularizer of the technologies, taking the idea of the graphical interface - featuring icons, overlapping windows, and a mouse-and creating the computer that was to become the Macintosh. Microsoft, in turn, borrowed heavily from Apple in creating Windows.

Apple, Adobe and others have helped to create the PARC-inspired desktop publishing industry. 3Com and others have popularized Ethernet networks.

But nobody has succeeded in recreating the PARC magic. At Microsoft they have the beanbag chairs, but the company's culture is too aggressive and marketing oriented to accommodate an operation like PARC. Interval Research, funded by Microsoft co-founder Paul Allen, is run by PARC alumnus David Liddle, and he has hired a number of his former PARC colleagues and instituted some of the research center's conventions.

But Charles Irby, who left Xerox with Liddle in the early 1980s to start Metaphor Computer--now a subsidiary of IBM--was recently wooed by his former partner, and he didn't see much resemblance to the old days.

"It looks like PARC, only everyone has grayed," Irby says. "But it didn't feel like PARC, because the argumentative personalities aren't there. It felt less vibrant." Irby turned the job down in favor of a position at Silicon Graphics Inc.

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