

The Theory of Management^{*}

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Management Consultant of many years' professional service and a pioneer in the pursuit of management development. Has long advocated the serious study of management as a subject in its own right and has supported this by authorship of several books in this field. Some fifteen years ago he first tried—alas, in vain!—to get managers interested in the notion of an authoritative theory underlying the sound practice of management. Not easily discouraged, he is trying again in this article. Also an Editor's plea—The Editor and the Author hope that serious readers will respond with follow-up articles or letters commenting on the "theory" as here expounded and offering improvements.

Preamble

IN MANY DISCUSSIONS of the now widely popular subject of "training for management" attention seems to focus largely on the provision of instruction as to the environment or setting within which management is exercised. The manager, it is variously argued, needs to have better technological training, or more familiarity with economics, or a grounding in psychology. True, many arguments support the view of training him in techniques—industrial engineering, planning, cost control, or sales analysis. Little emphasis appears to be given to the nature of the management skill in itself or to the factors that underlie the motivation of the manager in the exercise of his role.

No serious or adequate progress in the training or development of managers is possible unless these items figure soundly in the basis of the training. What "management" is will be a powerful determining factor in deciding "what the manager should be" or "what makes him competent in his skill"; it thus determines the features that should characterise selection

for appointment and advancement. There is a widespread confusion between the "manager" and the "entrepreneur": the captain of industry who is really an intuitively skilful "market operator" is all too often labelled as "competent manager" and preferred as to the model to the rising generation. Nothing could be farther from the truth. For many management positions this is just the type of make-up, outlook and skill that is *not* wanted and *cannot* be successful.

Motivation adds to the confusion. The success story is another of the inappropriate standards, unless carefully construed. Many a man who has got to the top and made his personal golden pile in the process fails his business in the moment of withdrawal: his management ignorance has let him pass along unconcerned about delegation or succession and there is no management competence to replace the drive of the self-seeking motive—of course, he has always made sure that nobody shares *this* with him! Interest in self-advancement is the hallmark of the intelligent man; this is as true in the professions or in the academic world as in other walks of life. The differences lie in relative emphasis. The genuine professional man sees his advancement along the horizon of outstanding contribution to his profession, his own betterment and enrichment being the accompaniment of his

^{*}This article is based on the comprehensive analysis of the management process which forms a major feature of the newly published Second Edition of "The Principles and Practice of Management": Edited by E. F. L. Brech (Longmans Green & Co., London, 1963). Excerpts from the volume interwoven into the present article are reproduced with the permission of the publishers.