



THE ROYAL BANK OF CANADA

MONTHLY LETTER

VOL. 54, No. 6

HEAD OFFICE: MONTREAL, JUNE 1973

Managers are Made

IF IT DEPENDED solely upon heredity to produce managers the business world would be running a lot of "Career opportunities" advertisements. A person may be born with a bossy disposition, but many other qualities must be added by study and work.

Managers are made. They acquire a substantial background of knowledge in school; they learn the techniques and absorb the atmosphere in business college; perhaps they go on to take a management course in university; and then they reach for the bottom rung on the ladder and keep on learning step by step.

Here is the manager's job: within the framework of the policy of his firm, and within the limits of his budget, to get the work of his department or branch done in gear with the work of other sections of the business so as to produce goods or services profitably.

The managerial functions are basically the same no matter what the line of business is. The principles governing management apply in a small office or in a big factory; only the volume of the work differs. The commodities made by a firm may be radically different from those made by the last company where a man was manager, but that is not material: it is his management skill that is his essential quality.

Some advisers say that a person should study what was done by the people in *Who's Who* to further their careers. That is good advice so long as it is applied to the spirit, the enterprise, and the courage that are needed; but the carrying of imitation of methods and procedures into practice is a delicate operation.

Izaak Walton tells in his *Compleat Angler* about the preacher who borrowed a sermon that had gained great commendation for the man who composed and preached it. The borrower preached it word for word, but his effort brought him only adverse criticism. He had the words, but not the technique of saying them so as to reach the minds and move the spirits of the people. A manager, similarly, has to be himself, expressing his own talent, and not a copier of other men's successes.

Thus, a manager makes himself according to a plan

that includes not only the techniques of administration but all the special gifts he has. He may, for example, be a specialist in a narrow field, or he may be an integrator of specialists who brings the broad field of their activities into productive channels.

There are many qualities contributing to the efficiency of a manager, some of them not measurable on graphs and charts. A few may be mentioned because they seem to be of universal application: a strong feeling of responsibility, moral courage, the will to push things through against odds, good judgment, quick thought leading to effective action, thoroughness in everything he does, zeal for his company and enterprise in his search for betterment.

The manager is not principally concerned with things, but with people. He may be rated by the quantity and quality of goods his office or factory sends through the shipping door, but it is people — his workers — who get the goods to the door.

Every manager needs to keep a sharp watch on the performance of his people. He must develop some of the attributes of King Argus, who had a hundred eyes of which only two were allowed to be asleep at the same time.

Pin-point your objective

Training for management is not a once-in-a-lifetime affair. Knowledge becomes obsolete quickly. One must be constantly in quest of new data and viewpoints.

The thing to do is to check at periodic intervals the ability, knowledge, or attitude in which you detect weakness, and then apply yourself to bettering it. Improvement of managerial skill will not be fast if you start at the "A" page of the encyclopedia determined to work steadily through to the last of the "Z" pages. Your problem may be under "C" for communication, or "L" for leadership.

Personal fulfillment is the theme underlying all your search for betterment. Work satisfaction is an individual thing. Bertrand Russell expressed the opinion: "The most intelligent young people in Western

countries tend to have that kind of unhappiness that comes of finding no adequate employment for their best talents."

Your job and you are unique. Many people may be listed in the census as doing the same kind of work as you, but you are successful according to the measure in which you put the stamp of your spirit and personality and talent on what you do.

Having a managerial position requires you to set goals not only for yourself but for your department. These need to be constantly revised to meet new circumstances and new standards. You need a feed-back system to keep you alert to the need for these changes, and a continuing inflow of knowledge to prepare you to cope with them.

Much of a manager's work consists in plodding. What the public mistakes for intuitive brilliance is the result of thorough, painstaking research.

This provides the sinews of leadership. To inspire collaboration from a position of strength based on knowledge is more effective, and more pleasant, than to dictate from a position of weakness.

When you are in charge, take charge. Let there be no doubt about your determination to do the job for which you are responsible. Seeking co-operation does not mean that you will tolerate wilful disobedience of your instructions. But set a fine example. Thackeray tells us in his *Book of Snobs* about the man whose only good action in his life was the involuntary one of giving an example to be avoided.

Without doubt, gaining effective co-operation is one of the essential tasks faced by a manager. He must do patient, pedestrian work to learn and apply the principles of earning participation in turning out a high class product. This requires that he give the team a definite mutual objective.

Team-work is not fairly represented by the picture of a crew of workers under discipline and direction. It is achieved through voluntary effort pooled in a common cause. Eric Shipton, leader of the 1937 Mount Everest expedition, said: "You cannot argue an expedition into running smoothly, nor avoid a competitive feeling by appealing for the 'team spirit'."

Ideas and problems

While training others you will continue to increase your own knowledge.

Having picked up some new ideas, mix them with your old ideas and move them around. This is an excellent way to keep out of a mental rut. Some day when there is nothing pressing to handle, look around your office and your work-room in search of something that might be improved. Have a pad of paper handy on which to make notes. Choose one of your thoughts and treat it as a problem. What do you know about it? What solutions have been tried and why did they fail to solve the problem? Then write down all the ideas that come to mind about other ways of approaching

the problem. Evaluate them, throwing some out as being impracticable, but writing down the facts upon which you base your judgment. Set others aside as being possible except for this or that stated reason. They may be useful to combine with new ideas later on. Those that are left are worth your consideration . . . and you have had an exercise in creative power.

Ideas that are to be used in management must stand logical analysis. Theories based upon inadequate or untested data will not work, and they cause a great deal of upset when a manager imposes them on workers.

Learning to manage the facts is as important as learning to manage a business. Bring them into some sort of order in your mind. Pursue your solution by asking questions designed to test the strengths and weaknesses of various facts. When you get to the heart of things you may find that the problem does not centre where you thought it did and must be redefined.

Positive thinking

The manager who is determined to make his job creative needs to take always a positive approach to situations and challenges. Negative attitudes are disastrous to the person seeking to improve his management ability.

The person who has a label ready for everything and automatically files suggestions under it is also handicapping himself. He has ceased to bother to observe. He has not learned that to follow "precedents" slavishly is a beggarly way to live. It eliminates the thinking and invention and expansion that mark the person who is living fully.

Some people rest easy because ten years ago they took stock and decided that they would accept the fact of change in their environment and techniques and adapt themselves to it. But the changes have brought changes in the laws governing change. A reassessment is needed, because change today is faster, more radical and affects wider areas.

All change, of course, cannot be labelled "progress". One must discriminate. Progress is simply defined: it is change from worse to better. A manager is a person who presses forward on the road of improvement. He is not a direction sign, planted immovably in one place. He needs to show that he is capable of leading the way to the place to which he is directing others.

Some persons may feel sorry for the manager who is constantly alert and active because he is "under pressure", but what does that mean? Simply that he has a lot of things to get done by a certain date. The solution is to start managing time. List the things that have to be done. Eliminate what you can by delegating the jobs to others. Remove all items that do not promise a return in keeping with the effort they will consume. Set priorities for the remaining items. Schedule them. Do them.

A plan is needed, particularly by the person who is

contemplating doing new things. It is easier to step over hitherto tabooed boundaries with a plan based on observation and study than into unmapped territory.

Another sort of plan is the personal plan. A manager will find that if he prepares operating instructions for himself it will clear his mind, eliminate irrelevancies, and focus attention where it is needed. Some of the points to be covered are: the nature of his work and his functions: responsibilities to his senior, to his co-workers, and to the public he serves.

This survey will place the manager on the solid ground of knowing where he stands in his working environment. Then he will analyse his load of responsibility within this network.

The aspiring manager will find it useful to have a date file as well as a job schedule. He will dictate or write notes to himself as reminders to check projects for their progress. His secretary will put these in dated folders and will give him the current notes every morning.

The big task

In a world of accelerating change the mechanics of business may change month by month, but the principles of management remain.

Every manager must be a decision-maker, a planner, an organizer, and a person who gets things done. He needs to be a man of vision, to see opportunities for the promotion of business. He must exercise control over production, and be acquainted with the policy of his firm, its programme and its possibilities. He is accountable for results in all these areas.

Towering high above all other qualities in importance is his relationship with people. No person, however gifted or powerful, can attain or maintain a top position in business or politics without the concurrence of other people's endeavours. When Cicero said this two thousand years ago he was laying down a primary principle for today's manager.

To have influence with people rather than to exert power over them is the happiest way for a manager to discharge his duties. He has empathy, the skill not only to see what is on the surface of another person's action, good or bad, but to feel what is behind it, its cause and its purpose.

Human relations with workers requires that the manager pay attention to their suggestions and complaints.

When a worker approaches you with a complaint, a request, or an idea, treat the occasion as an important one — as, indeed, it is to him. Do not allow distractions; tell your secretary to take telephone calls, and close your door. When a worker has a grievance it is what is in his mind that is important, so listen attentively and sympathetically. The grievance may be trivial or unjustified, but his thinking about it irritates him and affects his work adversely, so it must be dealt with.

Even the routine of issuing orders is worthy of attention. There are many ways of giving instructions, but one of them is the best way in any given situation. In a well-functioning factory or office no substitute has been found for making the workers feel part and parcel of the firm. They will accomplish more than they would under a work order dictatorially given.

Someone special

The manager needs to know and allow for the foibles and frailties and imperfections of other people while being careful to avoid developing weaknesses in his own life. He will study to give his workers the same sense of dignity in their work as he has in his.

What does a worker want? A chance to use his skills, to be creative, and to learn new things. It is not the duty of a manager to make over individuals on his staff, but to give every person the chance to develop according to his capacity and his interest.

An article by Agis Salpukas in the *New York Times* suggested that corporate executives and union leaders are debating whether a new work force has emerged that will increasingly demand jobs that will fulfil creative needs as well as provide food and shelter.

The manager will take notice of this trend, and will try to provide his worker with these four satisfactions: (1) A feeling of self-esteem, by expressing appreciation of work well done; (2) A chance to develop, by encouraging him to use his strongest abilities and talents; (3) The stimulation of new experiences, by giving him a different task once in a while; (4) A sensation of freedom, by giving him an opportunity to make his own decisions.

Wise managers do not concentrate upon the present so as to exclude consideration of the potential future value of a worker. This is something additional to his immediate, observable role — a bonus, as it were. He must be trained to work intelligently and competently at his present job, but also groomed for fitness to take on larger responsibilities.

Counselling by a manager is on a higher level than giving instructions or advice. It is directed toward increasing the self-responsibility of the worker, thus making him a better and more trustworthy worker.

The manager may call a conference of workers to discuss some matter that affects them and the good of the firm. He does so in the expectation that his people will discuss the subject intelligently and develop worth-while ideas. He will stimulate people's thinking along new lines, and ask questions that spark discovery and elicit creative suggestions. An idea arrived at through a conference of workers is likely to receive more enthusiastic support than one imposed by an order.

Communication

People will work enthusiastically for a manager who knows and tells them where he and they are

headed. This breeds the inspiration and solidarity of a common general idea.

Every work crew is entitled to a clear-cut definite understanding of what is expected of it, what part each person is to play, and how the total effort fits in with the product of other crews. This seems to be so elementary a requirement that mention of it appears superfluous, but it is surprising to look around and see how many efforts have failed or have been botched by ignoring it.

Silence on matters that affect workers — and nearly every change in policy and personnel is of importance to them — is a sure way to alienate them. They should not be left to get the knowledge out of their newspapers or by the grape-vine, but, being partners in the firm, they should be told in advance or at least at the same time in a memo or a posted notice.

If there are moral and business reasons for communicating information, there are equally important reasons to speak intelligibly. Hazy expression and woolly explanation should be rigorously excluded from reports and memos.

Knowledge and intelligence

Superiority in a job rests on a solid base of knowledge. He would be a foolish person who trusted to luck for his advancement, but there is no harm in believing, as did Louis Pasteur: "Fortune favours the prepared mind".

The manager needs not only experience, which is knowledge of individual cases and events, but science, which is knowledge of universal principles.

Knowledge of the wider sort is obtained by observing and filing mentally what items of information are not immediately usable. It is necessary, of course, to use discrimination in amassing data. A mind full of unassessed and unordered material is unlikely to lend itself to anything more than a conceited parade of knowledge.

Intelligence puts knowledge to work. It consists in a seizing of relations, in perceiving objects and events that matter and sensing their connections. There may be things of importance that only people possessing a certain intelligence can understand, so do not expect the same degree of intelligence in everyone: after all, where then would be your eminence?

Estimates of a situation depend to a great extent upon the width, length and acuteness of your observation of similar situations, but not all of past experience is useful in parallel circumstances today. You need to isolate the part of the experience that is applicable. Knowledge gained in doing a job twenty years ago must give place to new ways in the light of changed conditions, the improvement in tools, and the advancement in systems of work.

The energy to do excellent managerial work requires purpose plus physical vigour and mental poise and dedication. A manager may have become so

enamoured of his job that only the severest fatigue will drive him away from it, but work is subject to the law of increasing disutility: the quality decreases. Nevertheless, it will be fatal to one's aspirations to be misled by platform and television speeches which promise greater ease, more leisure and a bigger pay packet. These, say the orators, are not to be obtained by honest hard work, but by legislation or some easy-to-take stimulating concoction.

Seek emotional stability

Lionel Pugh, head coach of the Canadian track and field team, discussing Canada's showing at the 1972 Summer Olympics, said, as reported by George Hanson in the Montreal Star: "We have kids here who think they are tourists. They want to go off shopping or sightseeing. I've had a top athlete tell me on the day of an event that the mood just wasn't there."

It is unwise to allow temperament to rule one. It can become an affliction. A person, and particularly one in authority, who is subject to moods, and gives way to them so as to cause disorder around him or to let the side down, is a trouble maker.

To keep your balance, vary not only the things you do but the way you do them. Move from one task to another. Ruskin said: "If you cannot leave your picture at any moment — cannot turn from it and go on with another while the colour is drying — cannot work at any part of it you choose with equal contentment — you have not a firm enough grasp of it."

Emotional stability is needed. This means that you keep cool under stress, that you handle workers and customers in a calm, confident and winning way. Stability can be undermined by self-analysis carried to extremes, though it is often necessary to look within ourselves for the cause of an error.

There are, as is true in all nature, limitations to be observed. One must not exceed his authority, or criticize more than is necessary, or be more aggressive than the situation requires. On the positive side, one must distribute praise effectively when it is deserved without being fulsome, give goodwill to workers without discrimination or partiality, make plans firm but not rigid, and deal with situations vigorously without being dictatorial.

The law of restriction is a good one to follow. Anything more than is necessary is too much. When taking a photograph you look through the viewfinder to see not only what to include in your picture, but, even more important, what to leave out.

When one guides his life by some of the fundamental principles of management, it becomes filled with programmed activities. Nothing can rob a man of the happiness he enjoys in managing an important piece of work effectively. He has become an individual, not merely a function.