



## **March 2010 - Leadership Letter (47)**

*Before we get started, just another Reminder to everyone ... we will soon be dropping our office land line in favor of our mobile number ... 513/919-7672. Please make a note of this change. Thanks!*

### **MANAGING PEOPLE, INFLUENCING BEHAVIOR**

#### **Happy (early) Spring!**

Many/most of our client organizations have had to make staff adjustments; some a little, some a lot, depending on the industries/agencies they have for clients ...

For some, the angst of laying people off has been burdensome, has impacted morale, and caused worry for the future ... "is it over?" ... etc.

Preparing for a recent client management team conference, focused on strengthening both morale and revenue/backlog, I came across my excerpts and summary from an unusual and helpful book:

#### **"MANAGING PEOPLE, INFLUENCING BEHAVIOR" by David Thompson (from 1978!)**

Well, it's still **very** relevant today, maybe more. Even so, I've done some editing and updating to hopefully make it interesting and relevant, whether you are having tough times or good times (see the following pages for my summary).

All the best,

***Mel***

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Excerpts from:

***MANAGING PEOPLE  
INFLUENCING BEHAVIOR***

By David W. Thompson, Chicago, IL  
Published by The C.V. Mosby Company, St. Louis, MO, 1978

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## **Managing People is Emotionally Difficult**

Managing people is a task more difficult emotionally than intellectually. This can be demonstrated by looking at three basic functions of a manager ...

- The manager is expected to **surround himself with highly competent subordinates**—people who are independent, attack problems aggressively, and take the initiative in speaking up for their ideas. Managers may give lip service to selecting such people, but it is emotionally difficult for them to actually do so. Most managers are reluctant to select or promote the subordinate who is ideal from a profit point of view because such an individual can be personally threatening to them.
- Another basic managerial function is to **fire incompetent or unneeded staff quickly**. The inability to carry out this responsibility at high levels within large organizations probably accounts for more business failures than all other factors combined. The cause, of course, is that firing someone is **the** most emotionally difficult task required of managers.
- A third basic function of managers is the **development of subordinates (changing their behavior)**. This requires honest feedback and coaching for the subordinate by the manager. Discussing personal shortcomings with another human being is again one of the most emotionally difficult managerial responsibilities. Indeed, it is assiduously avoided, postponed, or done poorly if at all.

## **Reinforcers**

A reinforcer is any sensory external stimulus that a person seeks out and wants to experience. What people say to each other and how they say it probably have more influence than any other kind of interaction in private industry. **Verbal interactions can make or break a company.**

## Forming Attitudes, Beliefs, and Opinions

The manager directs people or misdirects them. He brings out what is in them or he stifles them. He strengthens their integrity or he corrupts them. Every manager does these three things when he manages—whether he knows it or not. He may do them well, or he may do them wretchedly, but he **always** does them.

—Peter Drucker, *The Practice of Management*

## The Manager as a Stimulus

When the boss gives a directive, asks for a job to be done, reprimands, praises, conducts an appraisal interview, deals with a mistake, holds a staff meeting, works with his subordinates in solving a problem, gives a salary increase, discusses a possible promotion, or takes any other action with subordinates, he is (always) teaching them something.”

—Douglas McGregor, 1960

## The Power of Managerial Influence

Any response by a subordinate that continually recurs in the presence of his manager is being reinforced by the manager. This broad statement may have exceptions. Obviously the manager cannot be new; for example, he must have interacted with the subordinate over a period of time. Yet, it is a statement most managers should simply accept as true, since it requires them to examine their own behavior when questioning the causes of a subordinate’s behavior.

## Causes of Behavior are External

It is our behavior, not internal factors, that leads others to behave the way they do in our presence. The most effective way to change an individual’s behavior in the work setting, therefore, is to **change his/her manager’s behavior**. Conversely, any changes effected in the individual, without corresponding changes in the manager, will usually be short-lived.

## Reinforcement

The effective manager also **reinforces** positive attitudes by subordinates toward customers, peers, and superiors—confidence and competence, laughter and fun in the work setting, close cooperation between subordinates, actions and behavior that s/he feels will lead to constructive results rather than waiting for the results themselves.

## Changing Behavior by Changing Consequences

Managers often complain about the “lack of something” in a subordinate’s behavior, yet closer examination shows that when that “something” did occur, the manager followed it with a response that was aversive (negative) to the subordinate.

## Evaluating Changes in Ourselves

How does an individual know s/he is growing and changing? By noting changes in people around him/her. The best criterion of change in an individual is a change in the behavior of people with whom s/he interacts frequently.

*Summary by Mel Hensey*

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