MANAGING PEOPLE

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I have been asked to cover the above topic in 20-25 minutes. It's a bit like having to run a 4-minute marathon. The topic is enormous. Perhaps the best I can do is to string together a few "thought-starters".

1. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE HUMAN DIMENSION. Expert observers of management agree that the key to the Japanese "economic miracle" has been their sophistication in the area of people-management. By respecting peoples' skills and maturity at all levels of the organization, Japanese management has tapped an amazing well-spring of talent and commitment to performance. Western managers say, "Japanese people are different - it wouldn't work here". Isn't that just a rationalisation ? Has it really been tried ?

2. ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS. The most common question I am asked as a psychologist is "What makes people tick ?, or, "Why do people work ?" It is one question I was asked to answer in this talk. With respect, I think it is the wrong question. Most people work out of sheer economic necessity - but that is NOT what guides their behaviour AT work. Perhaps we should ask, "Why do people work for the highest possible standards ?" Our objective is not to get people coming to work (though that is a start) but to help them to work effectively.

3. INDIVIDUAL DIFFERENCES. Everyone is unique. There are no "pat" formulae that will fit them all. One person will seek to do anything that will improve his/her pay or status in the organization, another will be really motivated for recognition or the achievement of high standards. This makes the manager a diagnostician. Listen to your people; try to understand where each one is.

4. ATTENDING TO THE PROCESS OF MOTIVATION. We tend to treat motivation as if it was just a matter of providing rewards - money, praise, responsibility, or whatever. But the rewards need to be associated with effort and performance in a systematic way, otherwise we are rewarding behaviour randomly. Managers need to be a lot more careful and precise, and need to follow simple rules, e.g. ensure goals are clear, ensure incentives relate to motivation, make sure that performance is associated with reward and that people understand this, etc.

5. DEVELOPING AND USING INFLUENCE. I have recently come to the conclusion that the idea of "influence" is potentially a more useful idea than that of "leadership" for managers. Behavioural scientists have demonstrated numerous ways in which we effectively influence others. For example:

* if we have high expectations of people, they tend to perform better;
* major change can often be accomplished gradually rather than suddenly;
* assertive behaviour is more influential than aggressive or submissive behaviour;
* goal setting gives people a clear sense of direction;
* in general personal powers work better than it used to, and position power works less well;
* etc.

Some of these ideas are expanded overleaf.

6. THE ROLE OF THE BOSS. Supervisors and managers were once commanders. They worked out what needed to be done and they gave the orders. But that often meant that peoples' potential wasn't used. Nowadays commanders are less and less acceptable to staff. Maybe that's a bad thing but that's the way it is. The most effective bosses these days are often "resources" - that is, they see the group as getting the job done, themselves as "resourcing" the group - supplying needed skills and expertise, direction when needed, etc. - so that the group rather than their boss makes the running. Some managers fear that unless they are commanders, they aren't useful. Nothing could be further from the truth.

TECHNIQUES OF INFLUENCING OTHERS

We spend much of our time trying to influence others. It is what much interpersonal communication is about. Whether seeking to get our children to improve their tidiness, our customers to buy our products, or our subordinates to become more effective, we are all locked into influence attempts.

Some people do it extremely well. A polished and effective sales person, a persuasive teacher, a manager who truly inspires subordinates are all worth watching to establish what their "secrets" are. Sometimes such people acquire influence intuitively - it is just they way they are. In other cases they really think about how to get results and train hard to acquire the techniques.

The influence process has been subjected to much study by psychologists and other behavioural scientists, who seek to establish principles of influence which can be put to practical use by those who seek to increase their influence. For example, the science of advertising has learned much about how to influence customers by using techniques such as identification with admired people, emotional heightening, and the use of positive vocabulary.

In this programme our focus is on influencing other people in our organisations, for example bosses, colleagues, subordinates, clients, service staff. Your answers to the "People I want to Influence" questionnaire probably show that your success in this area is limited, and that you are frequently frustrated as a result. In all probability the reason is that:

*   you have not properly analysed the situation;
*   you are unaware of the wide range of influence techniques available to you;
*   you are not being methodical in your influence attempts.

If you can go back to square one, throw away your preconceptions about influence, take time to learn some key principles, practice them in a systematic way, and learn further from the results you achieve, then there is no reason why you should not become more influential and successfully solve some of the influence problems you have outlined.

Some of the key principles of influence are as follows:

1. Understand and develop your power position (by knowing your power base and by political tactics).
2. Decide and communicate what you want to achieve (by goal setting and expectancy)
3. Determine an influence strategy (involving, for example, gradualism, finding common ground, group dynamics, or negotiation).
4. Develop skills of presentation (modelling, assertiveness, and verbal presentation).
5. Ensure the other person sees and receives rewards for being influenced (by feedback and reinforcement).

The terms which are underlined above represent thirteen specific areas in which behavioural science has shown there are clear benefits to influence attempts. Each area can be broken down further so that the detail of effective influential behaviour emerges. In the Appendices to these notes some of this detailed material is set out which you can read at your leisure. The main features of the thirteen areas are given below.

1. Knowing your Power Base. Each of us has a power base in relation to any other person which we can use in our attempts to influence others. (They, in turn, have counter-power over us). Sometimes the power base derives from our position (e.g. high authority in the organisation, control over rewards valued by others and/or punishments feared by them). In other cases power is derived from our personal characteristics (e.g. personality, knowledge, expertise, of friendship valued by others). At the present time formal, positional power is frequently becoming de-emphasized, and personal power is increasing in relative importance. It pays to analyse your power base and to use power which you really possess.

2. Political Tactics. Influence is often gained by increasing or protecting one's underlying power by political tactics. One study suggested that the most frequently-used tactics in organisations are attacking others, controlling information, building a good "image", ingratiation forming coalitions, associating with powerful people, and creating obligations. The ethics of some political tactics may of course be questioned, and they may benefit the influencer only at the expense of the organisation.

3. Goal setting. We tend to achieve more if we know what is is we are trying to achieve. We can influence others by setting clear goals for them, and by encouraging them to set goals for themselves. However, goals need to be concrete, specific, challenging, measurable, and agreed by all those involved, other wise they don't work.

4. Expectancy. Research shows that the more we expect of others, the more, in general, they tend to achieve. We tend to communicate our expectations in all sorts of subtle and unintentional ways: for example, delegation is a clear sign of high expectancy. Expectancy is a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy which tells us that having a positive outlook on others and putting trust in them will ultimately help them improve their performance.

5. Gradualism. Major change can often be achieved by breaking it down into small steps, and concentrating on small changes first (e.g. the salesman's "foot-in-the-door" technique). Thus, in many cases the most important step is the first. By attempting to influence people totally, all at once, we often create major resistance, where a slower, more gradual process might gain increasing acceptance.

6. <u>Finding Common Ground</u>. Often we assume that the situations in which we deal with others are win/lose situations, in which our gain is automatically at the other person's expense, and vice versa. Often it is worth spending time on searching for areas of mutual benefit, and emphasizing these in our interactions with the other person.

7. <u>Group Dynamics</u>. Attitudes and behaviour are powerfully influenced by the group the individual belongs to, or aspires to. This fact can be used in the influence process, for example by involving the group in decision making, by suggesting or showing that the group operates in the way desired.

8. <u>Negotiation</u>. This is the process by which we exchange promises benefits, threats, and punishments in an attempt to maximise our situation in relation to the other person. There are important techniques such as understanding our bargaining base, setting goals, determining negotiation limits, signalling concessions, making threats appear credible, etc., which are essential if we are to negotiate effectively.

9. <u>Modelling</u>. People often imitate the behaviour of others whom they respect and admire. Therefore a powerful influence technique is to gain respect, etc. of others and then to "model" the behaviour which you want to develop.

10. <u>Assertiveness</u>. Assertiveness is a style of interpersonal behaviour where you assert your rights in a situation clearly without however riding roughshod over the rights of others. Assertiveness is different from aggressiveness - asserting your own rights but denying others' rights - which tends to be unsuccessful because of resistances it sets up in others. Assertiveness is also different from submissiveness - denying your own rights while letting other people assert their rights. Assertiveness is useful in many common situations, e.g. getting good service in a shop or restaurant. Various "drills" of assertive behaviour have been developed.

11. <u>Verbal Presentation</u>. Much of our influence arises from the way we use words - both the verbal messages and the way we present them. Slipshod, directionless, jumbled, or hesitant verbal presentation may do more harm than good. It is worth developing good methods of public speaking, one-to-one conversation, report writing, etc. and using them.

12. <u>Feedback</u>. We often influence by giving others our impressions of how effectively they are doing their job, or what we think of their ideas. This is a sensitive area as people have a major personal investment in their performance and can be easily upset by feedback. It is worth developing the skills of giving feedback (and receiving it) in such a way that people are motivated to seek positively for improvement rather then retreating into defensiveness.

13. <u>Reinforcement</u>.   "Behaviour which is rewarded tends to be <u>repeated</u>."   This is one of the most fundamental psychological laws.   We can influence others greatly by the way we reward their behaviour, yet frequently we (inadvertently) reward the behaviour we don't want, and ignore or punish the behaviour we do want.   Effective influencers know how to establish which rewards people value, to identify the components of effective performance, and to link rewards precisely to performance.