PDHonline Course P135 (2 PDH)

Management of Engineering Projects (The People)

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Management of Engineering Projects
# (The People)

Course Content

INTRODUCTION:

Proverbs 14:4
 Where no oxen *are,* the crib *is* clean: but much increase *is* by the strength of the ox.
 (King James Version of the Bible)

The illustration of the oxen is foundational. We take for granted that everyone accepts how important people are in a project. Let's look at two very real examples of how others have thought and dealt with people. The two case studies presented are very intelligent men. Both men are interested in running a successful business.

These two studies demonstrate limitation in thought. In reality, the limitation in thought is in growing of the business. The business owners had very different experiences with the use of employees.
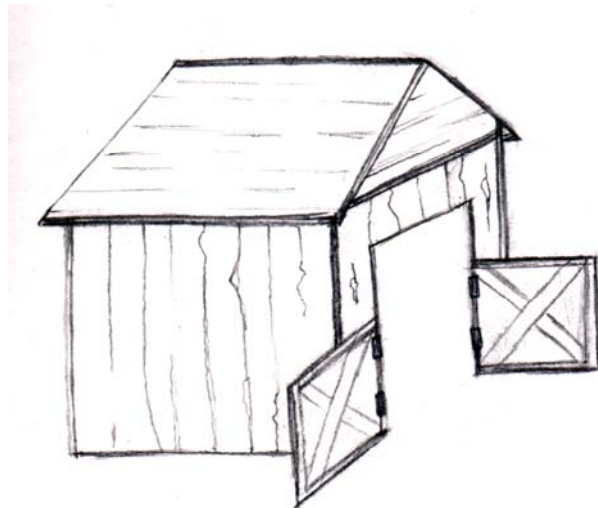
The first business is an electronics firm. This man decided to analyze his business potential. He was the owner and only person in the

THE EMPTY STABLE

business. He calculated the number of hours he could reasonably accomplish by himself in a week. He proceeded to calculate the rate of earnings and determined his income potential was limited. He decided to sell his business and went to work as an individual contributor for a larger and established electronics firm. His stress level actually decreased as a result of this decision. He made significantly more money at the new firm than what he was making as a business owner. However, he may have limited the earnings potential available from owning his own business.

The second business involved a manager in a large service company. He had to deal with many employees that had all the characteristics of our "messy oxen." The management of these employees caused him constant stress on the job. He decided to separate from the larger company and started another similar company working as an individual

contributor. His stress level decreased; however, he made significantly less money. Because this person had such bad experiences with the larger organization, he would not hire any employees although his business level with the new company supported it.

In both cases, there were decisions made that ultimately limited the growth of the business because of these "messy oxen." In the first case of the electronics firm, there was a reluctance to add additional personnel. The second case was the story of a person that had experienced the gain of personnel but yielded to the stress of dealing with the people in his employ. It is a proven fact that adding personnel to a business can make that business grow and increase its profitability. One important factor that is common in both cases is stress. Unless you as the project manager learn to deal with stress, stress can ultimately cause you to change the objectives once originally sought. Easily said, not easily done. Stress is internal. Stress will be present in your life regardless of your occupation. The stress level in any job is significant if we allow it to be. In both case studies, the managers chose another pathway than to deal with our "messy oxen."

After a number of decades of management, I have come to appreciate the fact that when other people are involved on a project it becomes very messy. They don't think the way I do; they don't do things the way I do. They all seem to have an opinion of how I am managing the project. The opinion they have of my management skill isn't always a very positive one. I recently met with a system engineer, turned manager, who worked with me in the past. Can you believe it? He had the "gall" to tell me that he didn't understand or agree with some of my decisions. No matter how smart or fair I think I am, there is someone that does not and will not appreciate my motives or efforts. I want to rapidly say that it is not required that everyone loves or agrees with the project manager. It is required that the project manager demonstrate fairness, trust, accountability, responsibility, delegation and self-control.

THE "WHITE HAT" SYNDROME

As I was growing up, the movie industry made many western films. In those days, the filmmakers would have the actors wear clothing to aid the identification of the characters. The "good guys" typically wore white cowboy hats, rode white horses, and carried ivory handled silver pistols. In contrast to the good guys, the "bad guys" wore black hats, rode dark horses and carried black handled pistols. I say all this to tell you that when I would look into the mirror, I would see myself with a "white hat" on my head. By seeing the white hat on my head, I knew that I had to be one of the good guys. Each one of us would like to believe that we are one of the good guys. We want to believe that our motives are pure. We also want to believe that everyone completely understands and they naturally interpret all our motives as good. It follows that if we are one of the good guys all of the decisions we make will be accepted. The only difficulty with this perspective is the inherent distrust that people have of other people.

Our employees will read our actions or in actions from the cone of their past experience. This cone of experience contains all the events that we have experienced in our life, which have been stored in our memory.   The experiences people have gone through color how they see the events of the present. It is essential that we purpose to share as much information, with as much clarity as possible, with the people assigned to our project as much as humanly possible. This means we must purpose to align our thoughts with the perspective of the receiver of the information when communicating.

There is great leverage with multiple people assigned to a project. The opportunity for the project manager is to utilize this leverage and develop a cohesive team while accomplishing the project objectives. There is obviously a difference between project management of an individual contributor and multiple people working on the project. The focus of an individual contributor is principally to complete the tasks while interfacing with the customer and any subcontractors.
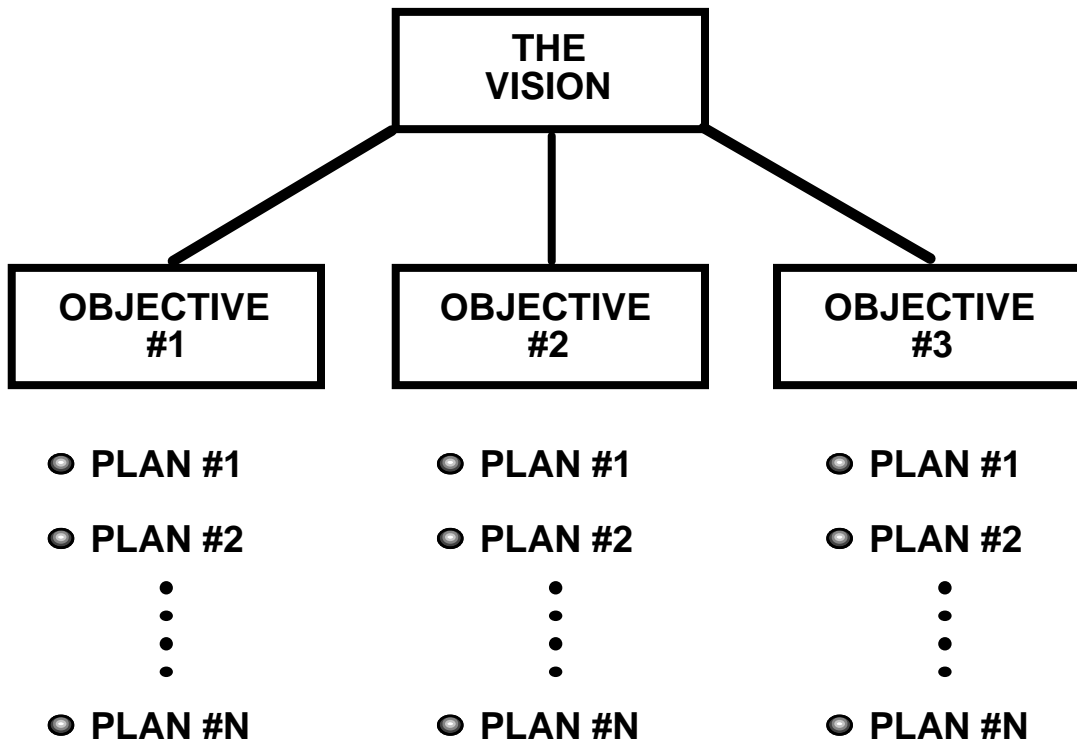
THE VISION:

Proverbs 29:18
Where *there is* no vision, the people perish:… (King James Version of the Bible)

WHAT'S THE OBJECTIVE?

This is an application of the proverbs that many quote to state that we need to know where we are headed. Vision takes on its very own life. It must be by nature a durable, clear, and long lasting concept. It must be inspiring to the hearers. It cannot, by definition, be double minded. It must be singular in purpose. If you, as the leader, don't have a concept of where or what direction you are going, tell me how you know to make a mid-course correction. There are many objectives that support the vision. A leader in the project needs to continually define and refine the project objectives. You as the

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                    │    THE      │
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OBJECTIVE #1	OBJECTIVE #2	OBJECTIVE #3
○ PLAN #1	○ PLAN #1	○ PLAN #1
○ PLAN #2	○ PLAN #2	○ PLAN #2
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○ PLAN #N	○ PLAN #N	○ PLAN #N

leader must not have poor perspective of what is needed at the end. If you do, how can you expect others to work along the same pathway? If everyone on the project is going their own way, the best you can expect is a poor cost performance and schedules that are missed. The plan needs to be developed at the very first and not discarded at the first inconvenience. It has been noted that we have a tendency to develop a concept and after documenting the plan, throw the plan away just as though it was some academic exercise. Improve, enhance, augment, and modify the plan to adjust to the changing situations. Don't throw it away.

The vision needs to be related and communicated in multiple ways. People learn by different modalities: visual, verbal, logical, and kinesthetic (touch). The vision should be communicated by as many of these modes as possible. The absorption by the mind will be more effective with more senses involved in the communication of the objectives/vision. Success in communicating the vision touches all methods of learning to reach all personnel on your project. The message must be repeated over and over always being consistent over the duration of the project.

Success, oftentimes, is a degree of proximity. Serendipity! I agree that being in the right place at the right time is marvelous. The number of times for proximity successes to occur is limited at best. The problem with letting "luck" make your decisions is that many of us are not very lucky. However, on the other hand, if we do all we can to ensure that we use the talents of all those on the project, we enhance the final product(s) success.

ORGANIZATION:

WHO'S IN CHARGE?

Do the personnel on your project have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities? Have you made their assignments vague because you are afraid something was left out? Do they know to whom they report, or is everyone in charge? I had a supervisor who did not like to give his people clear, direct assignments. He didn't want the employee to tell him that it wasn't their job to do. He thought it would be less confrontational using a more general job description. Being vague in assignments causes frustration and confusion between the people assigned to the project. It is better to add or subtract something that was forgotten in a person's responsibility than to have conflict between the team members. The job description must walk the tightrope. Allow for the ability of the person to make his or her own decisions. It should contain the requirements of the job and not the detailed implementation. Instead of believing that people are no good, trust them to do the job you have asked them to do. They will reach into their soul and fill the voids in job assignments. Clarity of roles is important!

There are many reasons for making sure that responsibilities and roles are defined. The problem we have is from our assumptions. We assume it is perfectly clear to all what their jobs are and the responsibility assigned to each person. It is easier to be lazy and not tell people what is expected. Both of these approaches described above are a recipe for disaster. It is just as important to define the roles of the people as it is to have a good business plan.

The structure of the organization is not as important as the understanding of individual responsibilities. There are two classical organizational structures, one being the project or program and the other being a matrix structure. Each of the organizational structures has pros and cons and each has specific purposes. Usually, the program structure is used for smaller well-trained organizations. The matrix structure is commonly used for large projects or multiple projects in a company. The organizational structure should be adapted to your business structure, not the other way around. Suffice it to say, the structure organization can inhibit your success. We will leave the discussion about organizational structures for another day.

TRAINING:

A common mistake is not to evaluate the training needs of the personnel assigned to the project. On the Job Training (OJT) is the typical buzzword for incompetent training by the leadership of the project. OJT should be limited to the learning of office procedures and interfaces with other organizations. If an individual requires specific training on skills needed for the job, it should be handled in an environment that does not affect performance of the project. After the project gets into trouble, the leadership starts looking for answers because improper assignments were made either through lack of training or lack of skills. This type of investigation leadership is too late, too little. This may help in future projects; however, it is difficult to salvage the current project.

Now, we have personnel poorly assigned.   We don't know what to do with them so we have developed an unfortunate technique called de-hiring.

Don't de-hire your people.

De-hiring a person is one of the most de-humanizing things that can be done. A person who is de-hired is given a trivial, non-functioning job with no purpose. They are assigned a corner office or desk without any interface to the project. The object is to "force" them to quit so you don't have to fire them.

Reassign the person in question after ensuring they have proper skills and training for the job function.

If the problem the person has is one of attitude, we resort to a "program for improvement**."** I have participated in many programs for improvement in which people have failed to perform. Only two attempts were very successful in bringing a person up to a performance level to continue on the same project. The best results yielded from their reassignment to other projects that were more compatible with their background and training. (Lest I castigate all the managers for bad personnel assignments it must be noted that each employee must be accountable to stand up and state their need for additional training.) Each employee has accountability for telling management they need additional training and skills to perform the assignments.

COMMUNICATION:

In every facet of the contract, you must think of how to communicate with the other members of your team and, especially, the customer. It's called your communication plan; without a communication plan you are at risk of having a dissatisfied customer along with unhappy team members. The communication plan will ensure the customer, along with other project personnel and suppliers, of up to date project

progress of events. The communication plan includes identifying events that affect the customer or those involved in the project. The plan allows the persons involved on the project to be advised should some disastrous activity occur. The communications plan will also help efficiency of the project by making sure all those needing information will have it at their disposal.

As an individual contributor, it is easy to become isolated in your project. To overcome potential isolation, it is wise to schedule frequent interface meetings / reviews with your customer / subcontractors to ensure the project is taking on the character that your customer desires. We often talk ourselves into thinking that if we ignore a problem, it will go away. The bad part of doing nothing is that sometimes it does go away.   Now we have justified our inaction. Inaction is not a wise course. While we are doing nothing the problem typically gets worse and more costly to fix. You may not want to hear what the subcontractor or customer feels about how the project is going. However, would you rather hear the "bad" news just as you are delivering the final product? The choice is yours; without periodic interfaces you may meet the "letter of the law" but may still have a dissatisfied customer at best and litigation at worst.

In the case of multiple contractors, it is crucial to keep the people on the project informed and tied together. I managed a project where a subcontractor was manufacturing a fairly complex part. This part interfaced with another part being built by a different contractor. After receiving a number of parts that would not interface, we provided the mating part to the first contractor and the problem disappeared. Magic? No! We took action to insure the mating part was made available to the contractor so he could perform part fit checks and correct the bad parts prior to shipping. Once the product was shipped to us, we went through receiving, acceptance tests, rejecting the part and returning it. I ask you to decide which was cheaper. Find a bad part, ship it back or come up with a way to receive a good part. Was it cheaper to do nothing with the problem or attempt a fix? Most of the time we think that if we just "beat up" on the subcontractor and make him do it right, the problem disappears. The impact of not taking positive action shows up in cost, schedule, quality and technical problems.

What steps can be taken to ensure the success of the project? The answer is related to the size of the project and the number of people that are participating in it. The minimum number is you and your customer. What, you forgot that your customer is a part of the project? In many of the failed projects that have occurred, there is one central theme: failure to communicate with the customer. The customer needs to feel like an informed part of the development team. If the customer is held off at arms length, he will be suspicious of decisions that are made, and the blessing of a long-term relationship with the customer is in jeopardy. After all, are we interested in repeat or referred business?

EVALUATION:

Personnel

Your people want your input; they desire to know what you think about their achievements and if a midcourse correction is needed. Your people are not mushrooms; they do not grow well in the dark. They need and are entitled to effective information to know if they are performing to your expectations. The employee expects fair treatment, that they are trusted to do the work. When something goes amiss, tell them something is wrong. Most people want to be treated as adults, not children.   What is wrong with telling the person that you want and need something different from them? The usual situation is we do not share with them what we want them to do. It is difficult to admit that we don't have all the answers. We don't want to admit that we don't have a clue how to fix it. Have you ever thought someone was waiting for you to show him or her something so they could tell you if it was right or wrong? As the leader, we put the person in the unfortunate position of trying multiple solutions so we can pick the "right one."

There are times we find people don't have the expertise or training to perform the task. You should know people don't improve their performance just because you tell them to. In fact, sometimes, they are unable to get it at all. They can learn by observing someone else doing the job a different and improved way. It is also a fact that significant improvement only comes from a change in the way we do something. A process improvement is the only way improvements are really made. I am aware that some managers think that all they need to do is just "beat up" on the people. We had a saying, "Work 'em hard and put 'em away wet." Nothing is further from the truth. People learn by your example; they tend to do what you do. When they are allowed the freedom of doing things their own way, they learn by the mistakes and successes they have. People also learn by being taught how to do the task properly and why they are doing it. We learn through our observations, actions/activities and training. I have watched many managers attempt to modify the performance of their people by using different techniques. Some managers think they can just "speak it" and that will be adequate. Others have attempted to embarrass the employees into "proper action." In either case you may see a modicum of improvement or you will most likely lose a well-trained and productive employee.

I hate to even bring this up: there is the group of people that are called whiners. Whiners have expectations that cannot be fulfilled. They are interested in receiving something they think they need. However, if they get what they ask for, it rarely satisfies them. This person feels that something is wrong and complains to management without a clue as to what would satisfy their hurt. Some people are chronic whiners and others are temporary ones.   When you ask them what they would like to have done about the issue

in front of them, they suddenly are at a loss for words. Chronic whiners should be listened to. The solution to their problems may be taken care of by just listening. As much as you would like to, they cannot be ignored. I'm not sure you really want to ignore their input. Even chronic whiners contribute to the overall success of the organization. If they are not contributors to the organization, then it is an action of mercy to terminate them from the position they have and either reassign them or fire them.

PEOPLE SKILLS:

(The problem of people skills, both in dealing with them and being under authority.)

AUTHORITY

An excerpt from the American Heritage Dictionary says:

Authority is the power assigned to another; authorization. Power to influence or persuade resulting from knowledge or experience.

I was recently speaking to a person I know. She was suggesting that new engineers coming out of college were school smart but had very poor people skills. Each of them thought they should be managers **NOW** without earning their stripes. I can remember coming out of college thinking my first assignment would be to sit in my "office" dreaming up great things, picking up my pipe, and walking by my secretary to go to the lab and create. What a shock to my system when I reported to work to find few knew that I was there. The work assigned to me ended up being pushing paper. In fact, not one person cared about my fantasy. One very important way of gaining good employees is through cooperative job programs at high schools and colleges. This offers an excellent opportunity for the individual to learn about their future occupation and for you to assess the potential candidate to join your organization in the future. The cost is significantly reduced, and the benefit is positive for both you and the student. You can contact any of your local high schools or colleges for detailed information on their programs.
REBELLION IN THE CAMP:

Rebellion against authority is as old as humanity. If you or your people rebel against the leadership, the project is headed for disaster. The symptoms of that rebellion are as follows:

1. The whispered word that becomes the start of the destruction of the project.
2. The dragging of the feet when asked to act.
3. The lack of taking a creative approach to solving the problems.
4. Not telling about a situation that needs attention.
5. Closing your eyes to a situation that is slipping out of control.

Have any of these symptoms appeared on your projects? How do you fix this? You fix the problem by keeping your people informed and treating them as adults.

DO WHAT YOU SAY YOU'RE GOING TO DO:

Another problem that occurs in the leader's life is a lack of follow through. Do not tell your people that you are going to do something and fail to follow-up. For instance, if you set up a monthly staff meeting, hold it. If you say that you will send out status reports, send them. Have you ever been told by someone that they will do something and they don't? How did you feel? Will you trust that person as quickly in the future? Your people will imitate your leadership. What is it your objective? Do you want them to tell you they will take care of an assignment and not follow through? Ok, let's say you committed to do an activity that afterwards you wish you hadn't. Do you feel like you have painted yourself into the corner and can't get out? If you have found that you have painted yourself into a corner, there is a way out. You just simply walk out of the room. There will be some tracks; however, better to have some tracks that can be covered with paint than an incomplete paint job. Just simply tell your people that you have decided to change directions. The people may be disappointed in your failure to do what you say; however, they can accept change. They will accept your leadership and appreciate the fact that you chose a different path.

If you still want to follow the pathway you started, then follow-up must occur. It is inadequate to just give an assignment without checking on the disposition of the assignment. Just simply ask questions to find out if the objective has been accomplished. One of the worst things that can happen is to give directions only to ignore whether or not it was accomplished. The second of the worst things is for the leader to tell their people that they will do something and <u>not</u> do it without a public change in direction.

GRATITUDE:

Gratitude is the state of being grateful. Why is it that we expect to be acknowledged for the work we do but lack the ability to tell others that we appreciate what they are doing? This is not the special recognition meeting that is held to recognize our employees, although this is OK. The gratitude being referred to here is letting the person know you really appreciate their efforts. Have you gone to their desk or work location and ask how they are doing? Have you personally told them that you appreciate their contributions? Your people want to hear it from you! One of the things that we can do to stabilize our workforce pertains to a simple recognition of their contributions. When was the last time you sat down and wrote a note to one of your employees expressing your appreciation for their work? What, you say you have never done it? You are not alone. What an ungrateful bunch of people we are. There is another benefit to being grateful. It is very difficult to be depressed about your situation in life if you are grateful to those who have

assisted us in the past. You say you don't believe gratitude will help? Try it, you will like it. We never show our gratitude enough.

STATUS:

WHAT'S GOING ON?

An issue of delegation

Feed the monkeys was the cry that William (Bill) Oncken and Kenneth (Ken) Blanchard made in their class on Managing Management Time (www.kenblanchard.com/) seminar. Bill was not talking about the friendly primate we commonly think of. Also it's not referring to your favorite person that gives you the biggest pain in your side. He was identifying actions or action items that occur during the work on a project. Of all the things I learned in their course, this was the most practical. There are two aspects to this feeding of the monkeys. One, do not take on someone else's monkey. It is so easy to have someone bring a problem to you and leave it on your back. We all want to help; we all want to be the hero that grabs a problem and make it go away. The second aspect is the person who needs to take care of the action is the one invested in the activity. They need to learn how to deal with the problem. When someone comes to you with a problem, it needs attention but it does not mean that you should grab your pencil and write it down so you can handle it later. Ask yourself some important questions:

1. Is this a problem that needs fixing?
2. Is this a problem that needs fixing now?
3. Can the person presenting the problem fix it? (They may be slower, but so what!)
4. Can someone else handle the problem?
5. Have I given this person the authority and responsibility to fix it?

Feed the monkey; don't take the monkey home with you. Feeding the monkey deals with the status and guiding of the individual in their problem solving efforts. I have also found, over time, that some of the problems are simply overcome by events and never needed attention in the first place. If you don't take time to find just what's needed, you will fail in your objectives. Those objectives missed will include technical, cost and quality performance of the project. My experiences in attempting to sit in my office and allow my staff to bring in status to me failed. You can't get the flavor of what is happening from someone else. The information is always filtered from their perspective; you need to see it for yourself. How can you understand the situation; it's like doing surgery without an understanding of anatomy?

Program reviews are a way of gaining an overview of a large program, but they are very expensive. At times, just the exercise of preparing for the review provides visibility for the needed actions.

They used to say that management was akin to putting your finger in a bucket of water and when you withdrew it no ripples would occur. The problem with that is management needs to clearly set the goals and objectives. The picture of where the project will end up and how it will look at the end must be linked to the vision. The intensity of "directing traffic" on a project causes us to be distracted from the overall objectives. We need the clarity of a vision to keep the project on track through the crests and the inevitable valleys.

REWARDS:

WHAT'S THE PRIZE?

Motivation

There is an important element in motivation, which is commonly called "leading by example." This is the easiest to say but one of the more difficult to accomplish. It is extremely influenced by the white hat syndrome. From our perspective we think that we're doing quite well. However, if you would take a survey among the personnel assigned to the project a different answer would be found. I know that if we don't demonstrate our personal commitment to the project and its quality, we shouldn't expect it from the employees. If we don't demonstrate it by our walk, it makes it very difficult for them to listen to our talk.

Let me ask some questions. Do you ask the people to do tasks that you have never done or would not do? Where were you when they had to spend their weekend working? Did you remember to say thank you for the work they preformed or was it just expected of them? Are you truly grateful or do you feel they are just earning their paycheck?

It seems as though we have been through a plethora of motivational plans and planners. Some of these motivational plans have very good training activities and team building. These programs can be a tool to train and bring your people into focus. It has been my experience that after going through many of the programs one after another the people groan and suck it up, saying "here comes another one."

Total Value Analysis, D.M. Mcgreger's Theory X and Y management styles, Quality Circles, Total Quality Management, W.E. Deming's fourteen points, and Five–S

improvements. What about Type A or Type B personalities and the Briggs-Meyers personality type testing? Environmental studies increasing the light or decrease the lighting, make the chair higher or lower. I'm not talking about ergonomic improvements dealing with true physiological or medical issues. I am discussing the Hawthorne effect where just paying attention to the people changes the productivity of the organization. I'm sure I missed two or three hundred different styles of dealing with people and teams working together. Did I hit any of yours?

Abraham Maslow built a hierarchy of motivational needs. He listed from top to bottom needs, self-actualization needs, esteem needs, belonging and love needs, safety needs, and physiological needs. Frederick Hertzberg developed a motivational model that had factors of motivators and de-motivators (satisfiers and dissatisfiers). This study in human psychology gives us insights into how people respond to our efforts to motivate them. However, we don't need Hertzberg or Maslow to tell us that if we are passed over for promotion or miss a salary increase, we are dissatisfied.   Conversely, I don't recall the amounts or when I received any of the "merit" increases during my employment. The greatest motivation in my career occurred when I was assigned responsibility or received recognition for a realized accomplishment. I realize there are exceptions to the rule. However, let us not forget that these are exceptions and not the norm. I think of the production factory Henry Ford made. A significant problem he had to deal with was the boredom of the repetitive nature of the production line. It always amazed me when the companies I worked for would attempt to reward the top 10% of the work force. With the best efforts, we would gather the management team together to decide who were the best performers. The management team would purpose to develop excellent criteria for judging the best of the workforce and then award the top 10% with sizable increases. For argument's sake, let us assume we did a perfect job of identifying and rewarding the top ten percent. I ask you, which would you prefer: 10% of your workers pleased with a sizable increase or 100% of your people feeling they have been recognized for their efforts? Do you want a team working together for the objective or a few "superstars" to carry the workload? Don't misunderstand, there are people more talented than others and it is great to have them. The message here is, don't alienate all your people just because you think you can't keep the star unless you give them big bucks. There are many reasons why people stay with a company other than money alone. The giving of responsibility and authority to perform the tasks are extremely powerful tools to aid in the retention of people. The opportunity to achieve the objectives in life can be more powerful than money.

CONCLUSION:

As leaders, we need to lead by example with a clear message as to where we are going. A clear vision needs to be communicated to our subordinates. Every individual on a project needs to know their specific role. They must know the authority they have to execute their responsibilities. It is important that each of the project members know who is directing the effort and their responsibilities. Your people need to feel they are trusted to do the jobs you have assigned them.   Job descriptions should contain requirements and

not detailed implementation procedures. It is a given point of fact that when we employ others to help us, our plans will not always go as we had intended. Our people have their own ideas, and if we have the ability to listen, we can achieve gain out of their contributions. It is also a fact that people give us the ability to accomplish more than any one of us can achieve by ourselves. The information provided here will help to improve the ability to manage our project in a way to make it successful.

It is much too easy to see things from our own perspective. In truth, we are a pretty intolerant people. We expect our workers to do what they have been asked to do simply because they have been asked. Ingratitude is a byword of our era. When, in fact, people do not feel challenged, they don't feel their full skills or potential is being utilized. They don't feel they have control over their future or career. The choice is ours: we can ignore it, thinking we are right and they should shape up. The alternative is to address the issues and never give up. Failure is not an option; it's not an option in the performance of our contract. Failure is not an option in dealing with our people.

Can we continue to go by this conventional wisdom that says we need to reward the superstars and leave the rest of the organization wanting? Can we put ourselves in the shoes of our people? How does it feel to go home to your family and tell them "I wasn't recognized for the work that I performed last year"? The type of training needed for job performance deals with technical, tools, and program specific information. OJT should be limited to the learning of office procedures and interfaces with other organizations. When employees fail, to perform, it is necessary we assess the reason why. Once the reason is established it becomes a requirement to let the people know what the problem is. It is unacceptable to stuff someone in a closet and hope they will leave because they are unhappy. We must insure communication is occurring with all members of our team. This communication must include our customers, subcontractors and subordinates. It is a principal, that if no communication exists, false information will fill the voids.

The more obvious a situation is, the more it seems as though we don't need to do anything. It is crucial, we have a plan to execute our business. Even if we work by ourselves, it is necessary to think how we will achieve our goals. The vision and objectives tell the community of workers where we are going and how we will get there. People are motivated by clear and concise job requirements with the responsibility and authority to fulfill those requirements. You can throw money at people, and they will stay with you for a while. You may even throw more at them afterwards to keep them. Eventually they will leave to go to the highest bidder. Money, or the lack of it, is a disatisfiers, but it cannot ever be enough to satisfy humanity's voracious appetite. When an assignment is given, it is necessary to follow up on the status of events. If you do not show interest in what is occurring, the accountability is missing and tasks are left wanting. Bill Oncken described this as feeding the monkeys. It is necessary to keep the pulse on the project; if you are not interested as the leader, no one else will be either, especially when the tasks have to be prioritized. Which one is the most important? The leader of the project needs to set the example.

Be sure you really need to take personal action on a "monkey." I used to visualize a monkey jumping off the back of the person coming into my office onto my back. There they were, explaining to me how the problem was insurmountable; they needed me to fix it. Delicious! How bad I wanted to catch that monkey and fix the problem. Why not, after all, that is my specialty problem solving. I want to quickly say that the problem didn't go away just because I didn't catch the monkey. It (the problem) still needed to be dealt with and attention applied. What is your specialty?

Basic project control results from the following:

a. Tasks defined
b. Schedules agreed to
c. Budgets accepted
e. Personnel assigned
f. Personnel trained
g. Tools/material/equipment available
h. Customer informed/briefed
i. Subcontractors under contract
j. Standards in place
k. Project assessment methodology determined