

## Management - The Other Side

By *Harrison Barnes*

Predominantly, this is an e-book that talks about the intricacies and clarities on various attributes of management, and enables all those who aspire to be future managers, or want to embark on the pursuit to be leaders in organizations they work in. Largely, this e-book elucidates on several areas of management; developing competitive strengths, and attain a leadership edge. It also talks about the pervasive intelligence quotient as a key requirement for managerial functioning. It's a quintessential guide that tells about a perfect boss that determines core areas of disseminations, leadership ideas and values amongst people in the organization. In a nutshell, it glimpses through the facets of organizational structure, hierarchies, competition, authority, professional combats, acts of terminations, meetings culture, decision making exercises, mumbles and murmurs, success secrets to reach higher echelons, communication, work assignments, reviews, realms of consultants and so on.

## Management: The Other Side

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### Before the beginning.....

I would like to define one special term here that is used throughout my book and that is the term "Grunt", which is taken from my military experience (USMC). My definition of Grunt is: an employee who works at the bottom level or one who is directly involved in producing the product. In my military experience we daily talked about the 10% that didn't get the word. The 10%

either were not paying attention or simply were not capable of grasping the concept.

Unfortunately the 10% of management that fall into that category are the ones that leave the biggest impression. Realizing employees are both male and female; this book should be gender specific. However, it really gets to be a pain to always say he/she. It has been my experience that males have been more of a problem in management than the females (that could almost be a book topic in itself) so I will use the male gender. Generally speaking the quality of management in the work place today is what we expect and is capable of producing maximum output from the best workers under the best conditions. Telling stories about that type of management would really be boring. This book is not about those people. This book specializes in the other side of management.

## **In the beginning**

### ***Manage: to handle or direct with a degree of skill***

In the beginning there was heaven on earth. Then there was a big change. Because two people could not follow a simple directive, another existence was introduced. The population explosion began and not long after that it became obvious that another layer of existence was needed. And thus the term management was introduced. This was supposed to be a means by which gifted individuals could direct the activities of others to achieve maximum success for whatever their assigned tasks. Shortly after the introduction of management, employees sitting around the rock pile at the campfire began to question some of the management techniques encountered.

Today, at least 6,000 years later, we find a lot of the same questions are still being asked. Management has always been a lively topic of discussion in almost every setting including work, bars, schools, home, and even churches. The discussions often include at least one occurrence of "Well, I'll tell you what, if I was in charge...." Many employees who operate at one step below the lowest level of management (grunts) will agree that management could use a little refinement. However, some management people seem to have come from a different gene pool. How can management improve if they are not aware a problem exists?

The sequence of topics presented here offers no logical pattern because there is no logic to the problem. Some of the topics could go on forever but we don't have forever.

The purpose of this book is to enlighten, entertain, and hopefully alert managers that a better life can exist in the work place. If the book appears to be just a bunch of random babbling, just pretend I'm your manager.

The management skills in question in this book are found in every type of business including manufacturing, office work, military, schools, government, and hospitals. The only workers today that can escape the torment of mismanagement are those that are self-employed. For the rest of you, read on and let's have a few laughs together (what else can you do?)

## **My boss is an idiot**

It is surprising how many managers are out there that are, simply put, stupid...his head is there primarily to keep the rain out of his neck. I know it is difficult to describe common sense but whatever it is, it is the opposite of what this guy has.

"My boss is an idiot!" was the most common complaint I heard while collecting data for this book. This places him in one of the following categories; One, He actually is a complete idiot; Two, as a manager he is an idiot; Three, he lacks skills in the area he is supervising. Ok, it could be all three.

As a hard working, caring employee, it is difficult to work for an idiot. You may have to produce a substandard product because of his management skills. You may have to produce a product that costs more than needed, or produce a product with a higher level of difficulty because the idiot refuses to accept your suggestions. You may find that just attempting to talk to him requires you to wind down your IQ a bit.

This job site is really hard on the moral because so often the manager actually believes he is on top of his game. Now you still have to get the job done the right way and somehow let him feel as though you did it his way. You have to wonder how they got into management but that will be discussed in other chapters.

## **Manager? How did that happen?**

One very hot topic in the break-room discussions is: How could anyone promote this idiot? There are a variety of ways to slide into a manager position other than the normal "because he is well qualified" method. Of course there are those managers that will or should go to the top. Our discussion, however, is on those that reach their level of incompetence.

### ***The Peter Principle***

The Peter Principle states that every employee tends to rise to his level of incompetence. So employees are promoted until they reach a level where they don't belong. Isn't that comforting? Then what?

Who decides when they reach that level? How often have you heard of management going back one notch? Well ok, the military, but the reduction in grade is usually due to an event rather than lack of performance.

### ***Advancement by vacuum***

This situation is created when a current management individual dies, quits, retires, or gets fired. Now we have a void, or vacuum. Naturally the next in line is a prime candidate to fill the position or vacuum. Management is not aware, or doesn't care, that this moron just went along for the ride and his manager did all the work. Everything was accomplished in spite of this manager-to-be. This situation ties in heavily with the Peter Principle mentioned above.

### ***What else can we do with him?***

The next-in-line candidate may have reached his current level just because management doesn't know what else to do with him. He may have been there forever. Now his current job has been eliminated. Management realizes he doesn't have much to offer so they put him in charge of something that will run efficiently no matter who is in charge.

### ***Manager...college says so***

He may have been hired because he has a college degree and it really doesn't matter that it's a degree in Theater Arts. Whatever! There is a possibility that this new candidate just doesn't pack the gear. Management doesn't want to dump him because he really is smart.

I'm not aware of any businesses that offer remedial training if a manager goes belly up in their new position. This is just a case where the grunts have to suck it up and deal with it until management brilliance once again shines through the haze of confusion.

## How many vice Presidents do we need?

I guess the title of Vice President is about as powerful as the average manager can hope to achieve in their lifetime. With that title the world is yours. People from all walks of life...well at least those within your division anxiously await new direction, attitude adjustment, words of wisdom from this powerful office. Sometimes top management has to do some creative organizational magic to provide strategic openings for all the mental horsepower available. Hopefully the grunts can appreciate top management efforts.

With all the Vice Presidents available, one can only imagine the intense direction provided for those at the grunt level. No longer do we have to walk aimlessly about. From the minute you enter the facility you will be guided through the perils of human relations, environmental issues, personal financial issues, production, quality control, mental health, and safety. At this point, from the time that you enter the building, the only thing you have to do by yourself is breathe.

The levels of management usually don't impact the grunt level. However, ever so often it seems to appear as though the levels of management are stumbling over each other in an attempt to get proper direction to the grunt level. This may be attributed to a new idea developed at a higher level and fear of loss of recognition as it trickles down the ranks.

This is a good thing for a bad idea but if the idea should actually be something worthwhile we need bands playing, banners posted, notices in the mailboxes, etc. It is essential to receive full credit when a display of wisdom is observed on the move up the ladder of command.

### **Education vs. intelligence**

I have more college education than the average person on the street so I feel qualified to speak my piece. Education as it relates to management requires that we go back almost to the beginning of time.

Shortly after the beginning of time, people would sit on a rock pile around a campfire and have a B.S. session about the world in general. During those days there wasn't a lot to talk about except what happened during the day. As time went on, someone eventually got to be the one with the most experiences and was given authority to preface statements with "I remember when..."

As even more time went by, this senior level person had so much experience that he could talk to the newbie's and give them advice on how to avoid the mistakes that he had made. Some of these seniors finally had so much experience that people actually paid them to hear of their experiences.

These seniors however didn't quite have a plate full of technical stuff to pass on so they decided to add a little of life in general to fill out the sessions. These individuals had been through a lot by this time so it was easy stuff to come up with. Most of it was just one notch above the general B.S. that the group was used to hearing but because it was being offered by people with much more experience, it was accepted as profound knowledge.

Since these people with the most experience were now accepted as pillars of knowledge, people would assemble from faraway places, even across town, to assemble into groups to absorb this knowledge. In addition to information on how to perform daily tasks, these lucky people were also given additional knowledge on subjects such as philosophy, great books, music, and theater. Since there was no specific theme to this education it was simply referred to as general education.

Shortly thereafter, training in athletic events was thrown into the mix. Students that finished all of these courses were said to have a well rounded background. Students found it difficult to pronounce educator because it has four syllables so the title was switched to teacher. And so began education as we know it today.

It is amazing how curriculum developed 6,000 years ago still remains today's standard. Many leaders of today have taken Philosophy 101 and the results are clearly evident... well maybe not right now, but I'm sure it will show up. Some of the Great Books that are required reading in today's classrooms are the same ones (different binding) that made the rock pile collection mentioned earlier.

I think the problem is that past graduates had to go through it (Gen Ed) so there would really be some hard feelings if newbies didn't have to take it. Couple that with the fact that all college management people are fine examples of Gen Ed graduates.

It's kinda like a young person sending in a cereal box top and \$3.00 to get an official set of U.S. Marine Corps dog tags and an official DD214 showing active service complete. That would be so very sad to know they never enjoyed the bond between the boot and his Drill Instructor. The same is true with a college graduate that never had the opportunity to absorb the knowledge in the Gen Ed classes. So in the end, tradition overwhelms logical thinking and education continues as it has since time began.

Now let's take a different approach to Gen Ed as it applies to Management. Let's suppose the following courses were added, at the very least electives.

1. Electricity/Electronics 101
2. Plumbing/Heating & Air Conditioning 101
3. Shop Tools 101
4. Basic automotive/Small engine repair 101
5. Home maintenance 101
6. Home financial management 101

There may be some of these already in existence, but what if they were universal? Imagine a manager in a manufacturing operation that knew what a circuit breaker was or keyless chuck or the consequences of a dirty air filter. Do you think budget requests would be viewed in a slightly different perspective?

In the world of education (teaching), taking additional classes has a significantly different effect. If you play the education game to the maximum, you can reach the highest degree level (Doctorate). At this level, you now have undisputed knowledge. No one except those with the same rank have the authority to challenge your wisdom. You also have the authority to plan a new course of action, determine policy, and evaluate all others.

An individual with a Doctorate (PhD) in a management area has somewhat of a handicap and that is the inability to demonstrate their level of expertise. In the technical areas (electronics, physics, chemistry, medicine, etc.) it is relatively simply to demonstrate above average knowledge. What can a management PhD do to demonstrate his knowledge level?

Well at that level, you can change the name of the business, take total control of the Mission/Vision statement, change the school mascot, and even change the school colors!

## **Battlefield commands made by non-combatants**

This is an area that catches a lot of attention in the world of mismanagement. The selection process to fill the management positions has been described in another section. The impact on the grunts has some interesting effects.

The management positions which appear to be appointed by education level only is something that grunts frequently enjoy discussing. All of the hours in the classroom discussing philosophy, great books, sociology, etc. certainly provide a greater depth of management knowledge. From their first appearance on the shop floor, one can immediately feel a better sense of direction.

Usually when someone works their way up through the ranks, they are well received by the grunts. This type of individual probably has demonstrated some management potential to be placed into that position. This individual also has a good understanding of the services or products provided to the customer.

However, this type of credentials doesn't always meet the requested profile. Sometimes this type of individual just doesn't fit in with the academic-only type manager groups. Having the grunts stand-by while the management people decide who really gets to make the decision frequently causes repeat expressions of I love my job...I love my job...

Probably one of the most respected moves into management is the arrival of a family member. Perhaps a new son-in-law just finished his degree in Music and is now ready to tackle the world of manufacturing. The first thought from the grunts is: "How come our section got selected to be led by this bozo?" It can only be one of two reasons. One, we are so extremely self-sufficient that a manager is in name only, or two, it's so whacked up that he couldn't screw it up any worse than it is.

A family member in charge also eliminates any negative words or complaints to higher management. Imagine telling the vice-president that his son is a moron! Any grunt will tell you life is not good when you are continually trying to cover-up, fix, or bypass to allow the family member manager to succeed. Most of the time the situation will correct itself but you can only hope the business can survive until then.

## **Authority**

### ***Who appointed YOU as my boss?***

Every once in a while someone will slip into a position of authority without anyone knowing about it. An example could be: "Well Mary, I'm going on vacation next week for a few days and I'd like you to keep an eye on things for me." To minimize problems, none of the other employees have been told. Now we have a secret manager. The range of authority is in an as needed category which is bad because the secret manager makes the decision. This is not a good situation. It is much worse when the grunts are not notified that there has been a temporary change in management.

The secret manager could develop a personality much like an animal that tasted raw blood for the first time. The secret manager could develop a taste for this management thing and even though there is no immediate permanent opportunity, the pattern has been set. Now we have a grunt with a twisted mind.

### ***You want me to do WHAT?***

This could also be titled: Life without a job description. A sudden appointment to a new task could have several negatives. One, that is a job that I'm not trained in and I feel like I'm getting set up for failure. Two, it could be a really rotten job that I've already done my time in. Three, why can't I just keep doing what I like and what I'm good at?

Getting set up for failure is a sinking feeling that we'd all like to avoid. An example could be an employee that has demonstrated above average skill with manual tasks. The employee then is assigned a task involving computer skills. Even though the computer skills involved are considered to be within a high school level, the employee for whatever reason has never been comfortable with it. Failing at this task or any task has never been an option for this employee.

We now have a lose-lose situation. The employee loses his confidence and pride for failure to complete at the level expected. The management now changes their view from an employee that consistently produces above average to a loser. I guess the answer here is to always gear towards one notch below the Peter Principle. Instead of rising to the level where incompetence begins, allow the employee to rise to their highest level of achievement.

Assigning a less than desirable task to an employee that has already been there-done that really takes a toll. I'm sure everyone can think of situations at all levels of employment that qualify. For example, a senior mechanic ordered to empty grease pits, a veteran soldier ordered to empty portable poop houses, and the list goes on. These tasks are usually considered punishment for being naughty but for some reason they get assigned to good people all too often.

One extreme personal example comes to mind. One Sunday morning while serving my country, I was asked to do a police detail which normally means a little cleaning up. Well we all have to do our share so I leaped into action. Four of us were given buckets and taken to the front gate of the Marine Corps Recruit Depot, San Diego, Ca. Two people were assigned to each side of the fence and we cleaned up all the trash around the entire fence line surrounding the entire base! This was not a small task!

I did not have enough stripes to challenge the task so I had to accept the management decision. Several days later we discovered the management person in charge didn't quite get it right. He was supposed to go to the brig (military prison) and get some more willing employees to complete this task!

### ***Workload balance***

This subject deals with equal work for equal pay. This subject does not require a lot of research to find examples. How many times have you, or someone you know, been assigned more work, or more difficult work, for the same pay as the person next to you? It's almost universal to find at least one person in each work place that is getting the same money as you, goes home with zero stress, does only those tasks that result in management atta-boys, is able to look overloaded at the appropriate time, and maintains a key-employee status.

Because of exceptional skills, some employees produce more than expected. Management then over time expects that to be the normal expected production level. These employees take a lot of pride in their work and so continue to produce above average without complaint. However it is extremely difficult to accept another employee slacker that is able to appear to be producing the same output. This slacker is either able to partially utilize the production of the other employees to their benefit or rely on polishing their few atta-boy routines.

You would think management would eventually become aware of the slacker status. It could be ignored for a variety of reasons. You can enter the slacker world through the use of several options. For whatever its worth, sexual attraction is here to stay. You can also try laughing at the stupid jokes, and even ask for more! What if your family just happens to own a cabin on prime hunting ground and your boss is an avid hunter? What if you had exceptional carpentry skills and the boss was remodeling....or the boss's bowling team really sucks and you happen to be an above average bowler?

Another method for shifting the workload balance your way could be implying above average intelligence. Always agree with management ideas regardless of the moron that originated it. Anytime you do something good, make sure you let management know they were responsible. Whenever possible, tell other managers about your manager's successes, but only when your manager is close by. Following these rules could put you into position where workload balance is no longer an issue.

### **If it ain't broke, why are we fixing it?**

How many times have we heard If it ain't broke, why are we fixing it? One of the marks of a good manager is to get the employees to perform their task willingly. This is very difficult to do while we are in the process of fixing something that ain't broke. This is the case of a normal daily routine, building site, staffing, or whatever that has worked well over a period of time and for reasons beyond our grasp, is suddenly discontinued or changed.

One of the first examples that come to mind is a major U.S. manufacturer that had a product that was well received by the buying public for about 15 years. Suddenly someone decided to quit making it! Their entire remaining product line at the time was in a world of hurt and they dumped the best one!

It's easy to understand if a product is a loser and you expect changes to correct it. It's when everything appears to be on course and management makes a decision to change it that qualifies it for discussion here. There are two different aspects to this fixing the not broke thing.

One is changing something that we have gotten used to, works well, and find no reason whatsoever to change it. The second is the money spent to finance the change. At budget meetings everyone is wheeling and dealing to find the money to pay for obvious necessities. Having to pay to fix something not broke really makes for a bad day.

Sometimes a change has to be made to justify a new management position. This person has received the rank but nobody notices. Now this manager will have to do something that everybody will notice. So within his appointed horsepower he changes something, not because it needed changing, but because he has the power to do it. All of the changes listed below could fall into that category.

#### ***Let's change the name***

One of the most effective methods for new management to demonstrate power and brilliance is to change the name of the business, especially a school. Since changing the name of a school has impact on possibly thousands of people, the impact is profound.

This reminds me of a new college president that just had to do something to show we are now really on the move. The existing school name easily flowed off the lips, had been around for years, was easily recognized by anybody interested in recognizing it, had thousands of pieces of wearing apparel with the name on it, and had a reasonable amount of pride connected to it. It was obvious this school name needed to be changed.

Changing the name require a lot of thought and planning. Obviously we have to appoint an executive committee to solicit the name choices, the impact on existing business, final name selection, etc. This could provide long-term duty for a manager until they find some real work for him.

Changing the name of any business is extremely expensive. If your business has significant computer usage, every piece of software that prints has to be changed to reflect the new name. Every existing piece of pre-printed paper (checks, invoices, transcripts, etc.) has to be trashed. Keep in mind these forms are almost always bought in volume to reduce costs.

If your school or business has outside advertising (billboards, yellow pages, web sites, etc.), lets subtract money from the operating expenses to change those also. The list goes on and on but the point is that it's taking money that could have been spent much better in the daily operations of the business. In my humble opinion this is an excellent example of fixing something that ain't broke.

#### ***Let's change the facilities***

And so it was that management decided the facilities need a fresh look to stay competitive. Management can make that claim because no one has the horsepower to challenge them. The fact that the facilities received a complete upgrade just four years ago does not need to be brought into the discussion.

Its also soothing when we ask management: "why are we doing this", and they reply, "it's in the budget...use it or lose it." However it is a little difficult to understand when the copy machine is broke two out of three days, the bearings are out on my drill press, its so cold in the shop my fingers are numb and you are remodeling the front office. Management of course will reply that it's important to have a professional appearance, even though the only outside people that have access to the facilities are the maintenance people. I mean, come on, we're a branch office and not open to the public! And of course those of us that have an I.Q. higher than a rock will always be asking ourselves what was wrong with the way it was?

I think one of the most exciting facility changes you can make is a change in parking. Getting a reserved parking spot is one of the highest awards a manager can receive. To see their name permanently printed on a sign for the entire world to see can drive one into an orgasmic frenzy.

Of course each new parking assignment causes one more unofficial assignment into the overflow parking area (3 blocks away). It makes it even more exciting for the grunts when you realize that the new reserved parking spot is for someone that is only there two days a week. Even though the existing parking routine has worked well for quite a while, it's obvious a change here will put new life into the daily work routine.

It seems that changes that have direct impact on all employees usually work best if you don't ask, or at least ignore, input from the employees. That way you aren't confused with facts and you can just do what's right.

#### ***Downsizing/changing***

One of the most interesting displays of management power is fixing the staffing problem. Maybe you weren't aware that staffing needed to be fixed but that's probably why you are not part of management. Staffing could be changing, deleting, or

adding personnel. Downsizing is the most feared word in industry. The impact depends entirely on whether you are the "Downsizer" or the "Downsize." Deleting personnel, otherwise known as Downsizing, can be a real challenge to the "if it ain't broke don't fix it concept." Removing people from highly productive positions for whatever reason usually draws a solid round of "What the " from the troops.

Downsizing sometimes creates more questions than answers. Why is it that so often the downsizing only applies to the grunts? Why is it that those that decide how many workers to dump also get the big bonuses for their efforts?

Changing also sometimes involves changing leadership rather than grunt positions. Suppose you have been working with an excellent manager for a long time and then top management decides to make a switch. The new manager has some questionable skills and has been known to play Solitaire for cash. Employees in this environment frequently are found with a calculator counting the days until retirement.

Adding personnel for unknown reasons has the capability of ruffling some feathers also. An example that comes to mind is a real estate office. The real estate office is well aware of the current decline in the housing market. Suddenly one day the word comes down that there will be an additional agent. The owner's kid just got out of rehab and just needs a place to prove himself. Luckily the other agents have already researched the qualifications for welfare and are prepared.

If current staffing shows reasonable success, how come we need more people? Is this management's way of telling us there is a slacker among us and soon there will be a change? Is there a new increase in workload that nobody is aware of? Is management considering moving somebody from our group up to a higher level and there is now an effort to fill the void? All we know at this point is that as far as we know it ain't broke so it doesn't need fixing.

### **Daily Routines**

Probably one of the most difficult changes to accept is the daily activity routine that has been in place for quite a while. This one really challenges the "If it ain't broke....why are we fixing it?" For example, this type of change could include a change in shift time or break time. Those that have followed the same routine for a long time would really be upset. If the change involves breaking up the old gang that normally meets for morning coffee, management might want to look at plans for riot control. These changes most often are initiated by those with higher academic skills. I think what makes the change even more exciting is the person initiating the change has never been in the trenches but because of superior intelligence is able to detect a flaw in our current system.

### **Product lines**

I think most people don't necessarily look forward to change but accept it as a normal part of life. Therefore when a new product is introduced most employees welcome the change as a breath of new life. It's when we stop producing a known winner that again brings out the "if it ain't broke why are we fixing it?" Referring back to the major manufacturer mentioned earlier, a product had been well received by the buying public, was still at the top of the heap, and they trashed it!

You could almost understand it if another product was up and coming with good response from the buying public and they needed the facilities to produce it. However in this case, there were no other sparklers...nothing that said "standby America, you ain't going to believe this!"

What makes this topic so vital is realizing that as long as we have a selling product, I have a job. Otherwise I can honestly say, it's been mighty lonesome in the saddle since my horse died.

The last item to mention on the topic of change is probably the most important. When daily routines are changed it requires significant time and effort from management to design and implement these changes. Thus we now have a purpose, or more simply put, something to do for that management individual.

### **Termination...treated like a convict**

Giving an employee the boot would challenge most managers skills. There are generally two reasons for terminating an employee. One, he just doesn't fit into the scheme of things anymore. Two, he's been naughty. Either way we get to see the manager at his best.

If the employee just doesn't fit into the scheme of things anymore (budget cut, replaced by technology, etc.), management could treat this veteran employee with the respect he deserves. The exit process should be as least painful as possible. If the decision to terminate an employee has been made, does it really have to be made as they walk out the door for Christmas break? If he's been naughty, who gives a rats what they do with him?

However, all too often both situations are treated the same. Why should a victim of budget cuts be treated like a convict? The employee is accompanied by one or more management members to his workplace and under the close supervision, removes his personal items. Of course this has to be completed during normal business hours so the other employees get to watch. The employee had no idea this was coming and is in partial state of shock, and now has to figure out how to face all his co-workers and friends, all while under the close eye of the "give 'em the boot" team. Co-workers get to watch as he slowly packs away the picture of his family, radio, and all his personal items in the desk drawer. This is especially exciting because at this time no one else has any idea of what's going on. They don't know if he is in the "doesn't fit into the scheme of things anymore" category or naughty category.

I realize there is a remote possibility that some nut case would try to sabotage his computer or steal some valuable material if unaccompanied. However if all terminated employees have to be treated as convicts, they could work on reducing the embarrassment and additional emotional stress, especially for those that have given their very best for so many years.

### **Meetings**

No discussion of management is complete without allocating a significant amount of time for the topic of meetings. This topic by far is my favorite and could almost become a book in itself. Meetings provide an opportunity to inform and invite discussion. In addition, some employees may get a feeling of success for the first time because they are finally important enough to be included in the meeting! The feeling is somewhat similar to a famous actor who played in one of the best comedy movies ever produced. He thought he was somebody really important when he finally found his name in the phone book! The same feeling can be experienced here. You have finally jumped beyond the bottom step of the ladder!

However, there is another view on meetings. Consider the following announcement:

*Notice to all employees. There will be a mandatory meeting, Saturday, July 2. This will allow minimum interruption of our normal Mon-Fri work week. The topic will be: Sex Equity. The meeting will begin at 7:00 A.M. Sharp. Please be on time to insure that we can complete the 4 hour session within the time allocated.*

There are a number of things here that make you wonder if random drug testing wouldn't be a good thing for this management.

### ***Scheduled time***

Meetings are not necessarily a favorite past time for the grunts. Therefore the timing for the meetings is really important. Consider the meeting announcement above. Sometimes you have to wonder if management had their solar panels aimed at the moon when they decided on the time for this.

The choice of Saturday would certainly generate some interesting comments. Saturday is considered almost sacred for a lot of working people. That day is reserved for outdoor sports activities, yard work, etc. Even though the employees will be paid for their time at the meeting, if given an option, I would not be concerned about traffic control in the parking lot.

Now let's add the time of the meeting to the discussion. The time of 7:00 on a day off would bring out the best in even the most timid employee. That may be extreme but let's consider some that are just as much of a pain but are not considered extreme. How about 3:00 on Friday afternoon? The only way that would ever be accepted with any degree of enthusiasm is if they served free beer.

The day of the week is also an important consideration. Trying to do anything critical on Friday afternoon is always a risk. Trying to force knowledge into somebody's brain is like going into battle without a gun....we lose.

Friday afternoons are a struggle to get through doing normal repetitive stuff. Having employees really upset before the meeting even starts will not qualify you for the manager of the week award.

The calendar date is as important as the time or day of the week. Scheduling a meeting just prior to a long holiday week-end as in the example above is nuts. Interest level would be below zero and resentment factor would be maximum.

There is one benefit to scheduling a meeting just prior to a long holiday week-end and that is it feels so good when it's over. It's very similar to repeatedly hitting yourself in the head with a hammer because it feels so good to stop.

Laws and management directives dictate that some topics of little interest must be offered to all employees, such as Sex Equity in the example above. I think everyone understands that. It is very difficult to understand why management would pour salt on the wound. Timing of meetings with very low interest is a very important consideration.

### ***Presentation Method***

How the information is presented is also very important. Utilizing an overhead projection of some type is always effective, especially when it's an exact copy of very small print and the presenter reads every word. The group really gets excited when the presenter has been blessed with an incredible monotone voice. It's hard to believe that an adult would actually find it interesting to count the number of floor tiles during this presentation.

No discussion of meetings would be complete without discussing breaking up into small groups and brainstorming. As an ex-teacher I can tell you from experience that this is an excellent method of filling time without much effort or pre-planning. The group moderator simply gets to walk around and attempt to keep the groups on track.

Going back to our original example which had a topic of Sex Equity, imagine breaking into groups and listing as many reasons as possible why you like being male or female...on a Saturday morning....the start of a long holiday weekend....at 7:00 in the morning.

Sometimes to offer better substance in the meetings, management will hire outside experts to present the topic. The experts then must present a "this is really good stuff attitude" and hope that it will rub off on the grunts in attendance. However those in attendance usually look at the expert as someone from a different planet.

The small groups often will introduce a topic of their own which is much more interesting. This generally causes audible laughing. This then alerts the moderator to intervene because the assigned subject is boring beyond belief and is impossible to generate any visible sign of interest.

After the allotted time for the brainstorming, the group is re-assembled. Now we get to hear the spokesperson from each group offer their brainstorming ideas. The moderator writes each item on some device visible to all.

After each group has had a chance to offer their input, the moderator summarizes the common elements onto the writing device. The moderator then solicits rebuttal from the entire group. Finally the moderator summarizes the brainstorming, which is usually just a repeat of what was just said.

Using this group brainstorming technique, as a manager you can easily consume all the time allowed with very little preparation. At the end of the meeting, the moderator, or topic expert, is given a round of applause, management takes a bow, everybody returns to normal life, and management can record another well done.

When a meeting is called and interest is somewhat less than maximum, you need something to really get it going at the start. One real popular technique is to have each person get up and tell us a little about yourself. This has the most effect when the majority of those in attendance already have been working together for a years. It is also very much appreciated when there is a large group so time consumed for this part of the meeting is maximum.

This is an excellent method to help insure we can fill the entire four hours. The employees also enjoy hearing about fellow team members, especially those that have worked together for years. If you join this personal introductions with the group brainstorming mentioned above, you will have no problem filling the allotted time.

For those that work in sales, the topic of meetings takes on a little different flavor. You are paid on commission only, so there is no wage offered for attending this meeting. Of course the meeting is scheduled for a date, time, and place which just fits your schedule... (is that possible?). The estimated length of the meeting should be less than four hours.

### ***Content***

Let's assume the meeting is scheduled for a reasonable time. That would be with full pay sometime during our normal work shift where critical production is not interrupted. We still have the topic of content to look at.

Handing out a meeting agenda is really a nice gesture from management. That provides all in attendance a means to check-off and estimate the time that you'll get out of there. It's very similar to going to a dance recital. The agenda also provides material for doodling and whatever else creative comes to mind.

Another option for meeting content is a meeting designed to allow management to straighten out the troops. This is a perfect time to let everyone know that employee X made a mistake and it cost the company a lot of money. This is obviously not the

time to alert management that you were not the one responsible or there were multiple people involved.

It could also be a meeting to adjust moral, like the lack of productivity.... we need to kick it up a notch. You could even throw in a slacker will not be tolerated threat to maximize the intensity. People in attendance at this type of meeting normally become highly motivated and can't wait to return to work.

### ***Why are we having this meeting?***

I'm absolutely certain that everyone reading this has been to at least one meeting in their lifetime that forces the question why didn't you just send us an e-mail or put it in the notice book or our mailbox?

There is no question managers need to make their presence known, especially when their responsibilities are the boring behind the scenes subjects such as OSHA, safety, Hazmat, etc. Calling a meeting lets everyone know there is still a voice of authority lurking out there and its time to take notice.

Then there are the regularly scheduled meetings. This is the type that meets every quarter, month, or whatever. These meetings happen even if there is no agenda. The attempt here is to keep the group informed, which is a good thing. However, it is somewhat difficult to keep the group informed about nothing.

### ***Length***

Meetings are not a universal pass time. The length of time requested from those in attendance may well set the moral level for the duration of the meeting. Imagine arriving at a scheduled four hour meeting. The individual in charge of the meeting then tells you something like: "let's try to stick to the agenda so we can get you out of here in four hours." Your moral drops into your shoes. Any hope of getting out early is dashed against the rocks. Survival demands at least a glimmer of hope that it will end early. To state up front that there is no chance of an early out is barbaric, inhumane, and may require an extra beverage of choice when it ends.

The length of the meeting should always be as short as possible. However, since we are still members of the human race, a relatively short meeting will also bring comments such as "They called us together for that?"

### ***Use of Keywords***

There are always keywords that management can use that add to the enthusiasm of the get-together. The first one that comes to mind is strategic. Using this word automatically implies the meeting was called by a top level manager or at least one that is hoping to be really important someday. It also implies critical decision making will be involved. The critical part could be who's bringing the doughnuts? or even more critical, "Who is going to pay for the doughnuts?"

I think there is a self-satisfying element in including the word "strategic" in announcing the upcoming meeting. It automatically implies a meeting well above the normal B.S. sessions. It also demonstrates individual horsepower to be able to label a meeting strategic. This meeting certainly will require your best thinking.

A really smart manager will read Readers Digest the night before and pick up on a few new words. You can use them frequently during the meeting and look at your audience as though your command of the English language is just one of your many above average attributes. You can continue to use the new words throughout the meeting even though your audience (and possibly you) doesn't have a clue of what the word means. You want to make certain they know that you made good use of your five years of high school.

I have a good friend that is currently a manager. The day before a high level management meeting she decided to make up a word just to add a little higher interest to the meeting. The word she decided on was "Repluticate." She used the word numerous times during the meeting. She never once received an unusual stare or questionable look. This indicates everyone was brain-dead, no one had any interest in the topic, or no one wanted to admit that they didn't have a clue as to what she had to say.

Some other good choices for keywords that come to mind are Paradigm, Pragmatic, cognitive, psychomotor, bandwidth, mitigate, and empirical. A really good manager must always be up on the newest buzzwords also. The ultimate goal is to present the latest buzzword before the audience even heard of it. Now it becomes clearly evident that you are a man of the world. You are in the forefront, a man of wisdom, vision,...yada....yada....yada.

### ***Location***

If any of the previous topics on meetings apply, the location of the meeting can really be interesting. If you happen to be a member of a large corporation with operations in several states or more, calling a meeting gets much more serious. You may have to re-arrange your work schedule, re-arrange your personal life schedule, arrange transportation and lodging, budget the expense, and then discover the meeting content could easily have been covered over the phone or with e-mails.

This is an ideal method for a manager to really exercise authority. To be able to call in personnel from all over the area or just be able to say I've got my people coming in today is way above the thrill of having your own parking spot next to the front door.

### ***Teleconference***

Many of the problems addressed above can be eliminated or minimized by a teleconference meeting. Here everyone is in their normal workplace with minimum interruption in normal operations. This is a great opportunity for a manager to demonstrate extreme control. If the manager arranged the meeting for 9:00 A.M., getting on-line himself at 9:10 allows the feeling of the whole world is waiting for ME. The grunts also get the feeling of an extremely important individual graciously freeing up some of his time to share with them.

The timing of the teleconference is also an interesting subject. One large corporation plans their teleconference during the employees lunch break because that's when they most likely will be available. Lunch breaks normally provide an opportunity to eat your lunch and to temporarily get away from it all. So now we have a group of employees that will not get away from it all but still have to eat. Because of the fact that all the employees are at their work stations attempting to both eat and stay involved in the teleconference, everyone is treated to the sounds of eating crispy chips, opening pop cans, burping, clickity-clack of typing emails, etc. Technology is a good thing but they are still human beings.

## **Decision making**

The most common unpleasant decisions are those dealing with personnel. As a manager it is difficult to be put into a position that requires notification of termination of employment, especially when the employee performance has nothing to do with it. It is also difficult for an employee when they know termination is possibly on the horizon. If conditions mandate that some

positions must be eliminated, as unpleasant as it is, the employees need to know ASAP.

The term re-organization really gets our attention. Top management has moved in and is now set to do something that will alert everyone that we now have a new direction. The grunts are certain the most effective reorganization measures are to dump excessive management.

Management on the other hand will concentrate on those employees considered dead-weight, anchors, or low production type people. The grunts know for certain because of the economic climate that there will be some empty chairs. It is extremely difficult to maintain while waiting for management to make the final re-organization decision. Rumors are running wild. Should I start looking now?

How bad will the personnel cuts be? Even if I make the cut, will I be able to absorb the workload of the departed? Will the cuts affect our production so the economic climate will only get worse? Who will be my new boss? WE NEED A DECISION!

#### ***When is it going to start?***

A common problem in management is the lack of ability to make a decision. We often hear that I'd rather see a wrong decision than no decision at all. Some decisions are not pleasant.

There are decisions to be made on new equipment, health insurance, facilities, shift times, etc. These decisions have a serious impact on the average grunt working in the trenches. Having management sit on them for an extended period of time, or forever, has an impact that is difficult to accept. There are decisions to be made everyday and that's why we have people making the big money. All we ask is get 'er done.

### **Would you be interested in any input from the grunts?**

#### ***I actually do have a brain***

Although decision making is primarily a management function, input from the end users sometime can actually be beneficial. There are two reasons to allow input from the grunts on decisions at the ground level operations. One, the grunts would feel good because they have had a say, good or bad. Two, it might even be a good idea!

Not allowing input from the grunts can have multiple negatives. If the decision goes bad, it's exactly what the grunts expected. Management has now taken on a less than superior image which is going to be difficult to erase. If the decision does work, the grunts just assume that's what management gets paid the big bucks for.

It is true that management gets paid the big bucks to make the big decisions. I'm just suggesting input from the grunts on a decision to be made may not be a bad thing. The manager still gets full credit. The grunts will be supportive. Everybody is happy. Happy is a good thing.

Lacking the support from the grunts can be a disaster for a manager. There are many examples of new decisions gone badly because the grunts didn't want it to work. Even if it is a good idea it's going to be an uphill battle if the new plan was just dumped on them. Change is inevitable. Coming from a moron is unacceptable.

I recently was made aware of a suggestion from a grunt that would have saved the company many thousands of dollars. The idea was never allowed to be entered into the official channels because they have engineers and other professional people to manage that. Imagine the response from the grunts whenever this team of professionals makes decisions.

#### ***I've been doing this longer than you have!***

This is a tough obstacle to overcome for management. Having a decision made on operations which have been on-going for a long time is going to be difficult to justify. There are some employees that are creative and love their job. These same people often offer suggestions to improve production, improve quality, improve safety, improve profit margins, and improve moral. Ignoring the experience of these employees is very difficult to understand.

Would the new whiz kid manager be interested in knowing that idea was tried three years ago and was a complete flop? How about the new idea which could work if employee experience could add just a few minor changes. I guess at the very least you would expect management to carefully observe current operations and allow that to be used as part of the decision making process.

#### ***Fear of why didn 't I think of that***

Management always seems to have that fear of a good idea coming from the grunt level. Now we have to find a way for the manager to get credit for the idea. There are several options here. One is to have the manager ignore the idea. Then wait a while and have the manager re-introduce it when he is sure he can get full credit. Another option is to go with it but add enough fluff to it so it looks like it came straight from management.

A pinnacle of success for every manager is to dream up an idea so profound that people from all around ask "why didn't I think of that?" However, when that idea comes from the grunt level, bubbles are burst, egos are deflated, and organizational structure is challenged.

## **Ladder to success**

#### ***Always agree***

If movement up the ladder is your goal in life, there are some well established rules you must follow. Accepting wisdom from higher levels of management is a real plus. It does not matter if it actually is wisdom. You can accomplish this by accepting a new plan, modifying as needed to make it work, but keep enough of the original plan out in front to convince the author that management has succeeded. It is also highly recommended that you publicly give credit to the author, especially in the presence of high ranking management.

If you have an extreme desire to move up the ladder without a conscience, simply accept everything as is. This requires a strong mental attitude. This position is easier to accept if your grade point average didn't make the deans list. Visions of management perks will keep you motivated and history points out there will likely be a place in management just waiting for you.

#### ***Management gets credit regardless of origin***

Even if you as a grunt get an idea implemented, it has to go through proper channels. If it was a really good idea it would likely go up several steps in the management ladder. As the idea moves up the author becomes more obscure and we hear comments like: "Well, our department just came up with a good idea." Then we hear: "Jim's department just came up with a good idea." Then we find it just easier to say: "Jim came up with a good idea." I guess it just makes sense that if you came

up with the idea and you work in Jim's department that it was Jim's idea. Grunts usually don't get paid for ideas and certainly are not expected. Management has the right to pass on to the next level whatever they choose and in the format that they choose.

### ***What else can I do for you?***

This topic can generate a lot of discussion, especially with the help of appropriate beverages. This topic involves that segment of society that hope to succeed by disconnecting their brain and becoming a servant to the next in command.

Perhaps a better description of this employee would be one whose dominant facial features follow in close proximity to the posterior aspect of the gluteus maximus of the next in command. Ok, he's a butt-kisser.

This type of person would not be the first to be offered a seat at the next grunt round table discussion of management. This person is on a mission. The attempted rise up the ladder will happen regardless of impact on fellow grunts. This person will never challenge a command. This person actually would be more likely to verbally praise intelligence demonstrated, regardless of the level, especially if other management is within range. Depending on current management, it is possible that this type of person may even exceed the Peter Principle level of competence.

Unfortunately an individual of this type would have a very difficult time if they ever did succeed moving up a notch on the management ladder. I think actually a lot of the grunts would enjoy the challenge of watching this individual get brought down to reality.

## **Communication**

### ***Content***

Communications as discussed here can be information designated for one individual, information designated for a very specific group, or information available for the world (internet).

Information intended for one individual is almost always written as though both parties were talking face to face. There is usually no time spent with special wording, carefully selected terminology, abstract intent, etc. People usually just tell it like it is.

Next we move on to communication with a specific group. The real difference here is that all the recipients know who the author is. Now as a manager we have to kick it up a notch. If you have a college degree now is the time to demonstrate that intelligence level. Talking plain everyday English here is to be avoided. This level requires the same use of buzzwords as discussed in meetings.

An example here is an evaluation form that I once had the pleasure of filling out. The business agreed to become a training site for interns to gain real life work experience. At the end of each shift an evaluation form was to be completed by the employee responsible for the intern.

I read the evaluation form several times, looked up several words in the dictionary, and asked some co-workers to help decipher the form. Some of the words were used inappropriately and some required research on the definition. As so often happens, we just gave up and marked most of them with a medium range reply (multiple choice). It would be nice to say that we just didn't have a high enough command of the English language to work with that form. But unfortunately it was the form designer that lacked the language skills. There was much more concern over trying to impress the reader with the authors mastery of the English language than their desire to evaluate student progress.

When communication is written intended for the whole world to read, the level of communication drops back down to a realistic level. An example of this type of communication is writing a review on the internet of a product just purchased. This communication is optional and if you try to impress the reader with unusual and unfamiliar words, you have to remember the cyberspace is just one keystroke away.

### ***E-mail...How much is enough?***

Now that the internet has been accepted in all but the most primitive work places, the gates of communication are wide open. However with the ease of communication on the internet we do have a problem with the daily mother load of e-mails to sort through. This is really an awkward situation. If management sent it, it certainly requires a reply.

If it is a really funny joke (or at least the manager thinks so), you have to reply with: "boy, that was a good one" or something similar and of course a request to keep them coming.

If we add to the problem by including input from ten different managers, add in the e-mails that we normally expect, the load can be overwhelming.

One feared type of e-mail is the one asking us why we haven't responded to their last one. A desperate search of the deleted file is made with hopes of recovery. To let a manager know we trashed his words of wisdom could be a devastating blow.

Trying to decide if we need to respond to the e-mail adds another level skill. Just blowing it off leaves the manager sad because they won't know if they had impact or not. Responding encourages more stupid e-mails. It also forces you to challenge your creativity by coming up with just the right response. The response must show you admire their management ability. This may be very difficult when you really want to reply: "I really don't give a rats."

Sometimes you also are placed in a difficult situation when you are not sure if this was an attempt to be funny or if they were serious. Your reply could be very interesting.

If our job was to just sit there and read e-mails we would give it our best shot. Somehow however we still are expected to do our job.

Now in addition to meetings, managers can keep in almost constant contact with the grunts. The opportunities are unlimited. Managers can grab a clever idea off the internet, erase all evidence of the original author, and pass it on as though it came from the local think tank.

Managers can also find links to sites which they are sure could help you in your job. Now we not only have an e-mail but another site to open up and read enough to convince the manager that you did look at it. Then of course a response is expected to let them know that's just what you were looking for.

### ***Interoffice...am I supposed to save this?***

This is a really interesting topic. Those that are in the circuit for interoffice mail are always wondering what to do with each document received. There is always a fear that you trashed a document and now the author wants you to take it out and

review it with him for whatever reason.

I had a co-worker once that acquired a rubber stamp with a red ink pad. The rubber stamp had only one very clear word and that was Bullsh..t. I cannot count the times I walked into his office with a copy of a document identical to one he had just received and watched as he applied the stamp of approval. Every time we laughed just as hard as the first time. The rubber stamp was so fitting.

It is a natural high for any manager to have a grunt pull out a copy of a document that was sent by him some time ago. Just to know that the grunt considered this document important enough to store it for later review, may be enough to cause the demise of even more trees for the cause of information sharing.

### ***Telephone...it WOULD be done if you W stop calling!!***

I'll bet a lot of people can relate to this situation. You are involved in frantic effort trying to get a job done. This could be trying to meet a deadline or trying to solve a problem. If you are lucky enough to be involved anywhere in information Systems (Computers) you probably have many, many people waiting for you to complete your task. Therefore you have many people that are also behind in their schedule. Therefore you have many people that are anxious to ask "how is it going?"

The same would hold true if you were a maintenance worker and there is a power outage. Managers are expected to have a handle on the situation so naturally they want up front information directly from the source.

It's bad enough when fellow employees call and bother you. It's much worse when a manager calls and bothers you because you have to be nice to him.

The situation also happens during normal operations. If you happen to be involved in tasks which will involve the majority one way or another the telephone can be a real burden. If your tasks are key to normal operations it is safe to assume many of your telephone calls are from management and therefore must be terminated by the caller. So if your manager is bored and has called you because he has nothing better to do, it is difficult to tell him to get off your phone and quit bothering you.

### ***Mailboxes***

In a normal work environment, mailboxes are most often used to store personal items. This can be notes from other employees, especially those that involve your love life, cartoons, and other papers that you were going to take with you but never seems to happen. In addition to paperwork we find bowling shoes, sweatshirts, hand lotions, etc. Occasionally management will get to use them for their designed purpose and that is hard copies of inter-office mail.

Size of the mailbox is interesting. It doesn't make any difference. It will always be full....of something.

## **Work assignments**

### ***Favorite employees***

First we'll look at the benefits of becoming a favorite employee. Work assignments can be adjusted as needed for the favorite. Tasks which are unpleasant or boring can be shifted to personnel that don't fit into the scheme of things as well. There are methods to accomplish this without causing obvious favoritism.

When management becomes aware of a task which is below the level of a favorite employee, another quick larger task can be assigned to the favorite so they are not available. Then to explain the assignment of the bad task to the not favorite, management can get into the "everybody has to take their turn" routine. Management will of course assume that you never seem to notice that the favorite never seems to get into the pecking order.

Another benefit of the favorite is the ability to sometimes shift company policy as needed. For example, abuse of sick time. We all know there is some sick time that may fall into a gray area. For example the employee that called in sick and was seen at the casino that night. Obviously there was a quick recovery and the employee was ready for work the next day.

The sick time thing could obviously fill a major section of this book. What is important here is that sick time must be managed but it's a little bit easier to manage if you are a favorite.

There are smaller less obvious perks to being a favorite. Although the smoking habit is declining, those that are still dealing with it have a lot to gain by achieving favorite status. Most business have strict rules regarding the time and place time for smoking. If the manager is a smoker, and you happen to be a favorite and a smoker, your daily routine takes on a much more pleasant atmosphere. Taking a smoke break with the manager is as good as it gets.

Attendance could also be impacted by your favorite employee status. There would be more understanding if you didn't always appear at the normal start of shift time. Lunch breaks could be extended as needed. Special needs events could be more easily accommodated during the normal shift time like taking your kid to the baby sitter, medical appointments, etc. If you occasionally have to leave a little early, it is easy to tolerate because of your above average work...or whatever you did to earn favorite employee.

When you start your shift you certainly want to catch up on the latest gossip from your co-workers, so you have to be allowed time for that. Since you are normally a very friendly person you are expected to get a few calls from friends during the day. Of course there a number of phone calls also that need to be returned because of your very busy schedule. I think one extra nice perk for being a favorite employee is that occasional long distance phone call using the business phone.

Your favorite employee status of course would have no impact on the quality of work expected. You would still be expected to perform at the high standards of everyone else...well at least to the high level of your ability. A couple of oops and boo-boos now and then are certainly within acceptable parameters...for you.

Another problem that is associated with the favorite employee routine is the barrier developed among the troops. The team effort is not likely going to happen. It could actually swing the other way where employees do whatever it takes to make the favorite employee fail. We have just taken a giant step backward.

Then we have to talk about what it takes to rise to that level of favorite employee. There are a number of methods of becoming favorite employees. Some of them have already been discussed but well just touch on them again so you'll have all the tools necessary to reach that status.

Method number one is to be a family member of the owner. This type of employee would probably enter into the system at some level of management. Mom would never be more proud of you. Imagine if you even came to work EVER YD AY.... even on time! I would think a position like this would require a personal parking spot right from the start.

There are two options for a family member to enter into the system. One, you can dump someone and simply take their position. Two, you can create a new position. Either option creates a great deal of excitement from the grunts. Dumping an

existing employee, or re-assigning one to make room for the new family member will probably not be one of the I remember when... things you would like to talk about during your retirement party.

Another method to become a favorite employee is the butt-kisser described earlier. You may not have had intentions in getting involved in this status at the start of your employment. However as time goes on and you see the obvious benefits it may become more desirable. Butt-kissing is an excellent method to increase your benefits beyond the initial benefit package.

### ***Above and beyond the call of duty***

The topic of work assignments has to include at least a mention of the employee that occasionally goes above and beyond what is expected. Management really likes that kind of work attitude. An example could be taking home a special project because you enjoy working on it and you know you are good at it. You actually don't want anybody else to get involved because you have a lot of personal pride.

Now we have a difficult situation. Management is only aware that they assigned the task to you and you did an excellent job. They are not aware that you have donated your scheduled coffee breaks, reduced or bypassed your lunch break, or worse case even took the work home. Several things could happen at this point.

Now that you have demonstrated the ability to work above and beyond the call of duty, it will now be expected. Failure to do so does not return you to the status of a normal employee. Now you must produce above and beyond or take the status of slacker. As a slacker you will receive all the appropriate benefits with that title.

Another option for management is to reward you. You receive a 3% pay raise but you also receive a 30% increase in your workload. Management could explain to you that with current budget restraints wage increases are minimal. But because of your outstanding performance they did manage to find a way to personally reward you with the maximum of 3%. Then of course there are just a few other additional things we'd like you to help us with.

Another very popular option for management is to make you a salaried employee. Now they can assign you whatever they want. You will get the standard lecture about the benefits of being a salaried employee...no more time clocks...get a haircut during the day...honor system and more. Once you achieve the status of salaried you will no longer have to diligently watch the time clock, especially at quitting time. Even your calendar can be modified as needed with Saturdays and Sundays no longer off limits. It is difficult to quantify the prestige of becoming a salaried employee.

### ***I take the stress and you take the applause***

This reminds me of an old 1800s stagecoach. All the driver had to do was crack the whip and steer. The horses arrive in moderate respiratory distress, dehydrated, and really tired. The driver gets a round of applause for a job well done and great respect for his incredible ability. The horses get a bucket of water. What's wrong with this picture?

Another analogy could be an assembly line in a manufacturing firm. The employees give it everything they have to produce a good quality product, on time, in quantities desired. The manager takes a bow.

How many times have employees taken work home with them, not because it was required but because of their dedication? Some employees give up their break times, cut their lunch time short or omit it all together. And again, when it comes to show time, management takes a bow.

## **Personnel reviews**

### ***Evaluations***

Evaluations can be a good thing. Their purpose is to bring out your strengths and areas that could be a little better in your job skills, attitude, and personal traits.

There are some areas however where evaluations may not be the tool it was intended to be. For example if you were in charge of a group of people assigned to do community service as part of a plea bargain arrangement with the court system. Your group's assignment for the day is cleaning public toilets after a major outdoor event. At the end of the day you are instructed by top management to have your group fill out an evaluation.

How about an Emergency room triage nurse? On a good day the patient is seen quickly and promptly cared for. However, more often than not, the patient is going to have to wait their turn, even though the patient assumes they have a high priority medical situation. Some patients even become upset...I know...hard to believe. Each patient is given an evaluation form before they leave. Part of your triage skills are evaluated by top management using the forms submitted.

A student enrolls in a farm machinery repair course at a technical college. The student excels in his ability as an Ag mechanic. As part of the curriculum however he is forced to take a course in computer skills. The student informs you that he has never done well with computers and asks if there is an alternative course. You inform him that management has laid out the plan and there is no alternative. The student does not do well in the course and receives his first less than above average score. You now ask him to fill out an evaluation form.

During my career as a computer programming instructor we had new recruits at the start of each quarter. Early in the career the students were pre-screened for aptitude. As time went on it was determined screening was not fair or whatever. The students had no choice but to give it a try. History points out that less than half of the recruits had the necessary aptitude to succeed as a programmer. The other recruits had to find out for themselves that there may be another career opportunity that would provide more satisfaction.

Management did however demand evaluations be filled out by the students including our ability to present the information geared to their level of understanding. Yup, that sure presented a clear picture of success.

Evaluations can be a good thing as stated above. If lower ranking individuals are allowed to offer input, good things can happen. This is your chance to really lay it on, to say it like it is. All of the bad things you have had to put up with for the past year (if annual evaluation) can now be brought to light.

Evaluating managers from the grunt level can also pose some serious problems. What if the manager has always recommended good size pay raises for you or has allowed some fringe benefits such as longer smoke breaks, allowed a little longer lunch, etc. It's not going to be easy to burn him when you got the chance.

### ***Personal goals***

Personal goals are an interesting subject. Management is asking in effect; where do you think you are going? You can answer honestly but we like having a job so we answer with an answer that management would like to hear. We say things like I want to be the best welder God ever created or I'm going to change my attitude or I'm going to convince you that I like

my job. I'm certain within one day after the goal is stated the average employee could not recall what they said, or care. It does look good on paper. Management can state that all of their employees have high level goals and are working hard to attain them.

### **I have a college degree, therefore....**

Once upon a time there was a very successful sales person that sold pharmaceuticals for a major manufacturer. His name was Harry. Harry's challenge was to convince Doctors that his manufacturer had the best line of medicine for the Doctors patients. Harry worked for many years to develop just the right technique to convince the Doctors to try his product and it worked very well.

The manufacturer decided it was time to kick up the management skills a couple of notches so they hired group of college graduates with Masters Degrees in Business Administration. The group was ordered to develop just the right sales technique to increase sales to the very busy Doctors. I'm sure the management group spent many long hours developing this new technique.

Finally it was time to present the new sales techniques to the sales force. The new management group called all the sales force together for a strategic meeting (see Meetings - Use of keywords).

One of the items on the agenda was anticipated sales goals as compared to actual current sales. Most of the current sales people were at the 100% level, in fact averaging around 103%. Harry however was at 117% and always excelled well above the norm.

Management inquired as to how Harry always exceeded his goals. Harry explained that over a long period of time he was able to get to know each of the Doctors quite well and something about their personal life, specifically their hobbies. Harry contacted a major fishing lure manufacturer and bought quantities of the very latest fishing plugs. He bought cassette tapes or CDs of very specific music. He bought small containers of very special high quality golf balls. Harry submitted the bill to management but never was challenged because his sales were always so high.

When Harry contacted the Doctors he would always leave a brochure of the medicine with one of the items listed above. The Doctors were inclined to read the material because the gift was actually something they could use. It worked! Yes new laws now do not allow manufacturers to give gifts to encourage pharmaceutical sales but it's the thinking from above that is our concern here.

Ok, back to the meeting. The management team then unveiled the new sales technique. They decided the most effective method to introduce a new medicine was to offer lunch to the Doctor while they viewed a presentation of the medicine. Bills submitted to pay for other sales techniques would not be approved.

Harry inquired if the MBA team had ever done any actual selling. They replied no but they had done extensive research on the subject and felt quite comfortable with it. From their standpoint the sales effort was in a desperate need of a new direction.

Well most Doctors can afford lunch all on their own. Offering a free lunch if they would just dedicate their entire lunch time for a presentation of a new drug did not increase sales. However the plan was put together by a group of MBA graduates so the plan was implemented as scheduled.

Harry didn't really care for the decrease in his personal sales. Management then looked at Harry's position with the firm. Even though Harry had a college degree, it was from the old school. Here we have a person that is resisting change. He also is making big bucks. Harry also had another big negative; he was in his 50's.

It was time for the MBA crew to show some real management ability so they gave Harry the boot. Harry was replaced by a new recent college graduate. Of course the new graduate was hired for a much smaller wage than Harry's so the MBA crew was beginning to shine.

Well the new salesperson didn't quite produce the same sales figures as Harry so they hired an additional recent college graduate to help fill Harry's position. They still couldn't reach Harry's sales level. Now we are seeing some real management skills.

Some top management members are very proud of their academic achievements no matter how they got it. They therefore want the same caliber of people, people off the same boat, people that would rather read the Wall Street Journal than Playboy. Maybe this whole picture would change if they would include one additional course titled Common Sense 101.

There is one additional scenario that comes to mind that again challenges the idea of education and intelligence used in the same sentence. Consider the following notice:

Notice to all employees: Next Wednesday has been declared Education awareness day. There will be an Education Awareness discussion in the main auditorium at 10:00 A.M. Classes will be cancelled that day to allow both faculty and students to attend.

I think the notice speaks for itself.

### **Micro management**

Why is the location of the Christmas party more important than how to increase sales? What makes the location of the employee refrigerator more important than lack of parts for the assembly line? Hopefully you can see where we are going with this theme.

The term Micro management seems to occur in a lot of employee discussions (otherwise known as bull sessions) these days. The term is closely related to priorities. There are issues that are critical to the survival of the business. Then there are issues that someone had to think really long and hard on to make it an issue.

It may be that managers like to act on issues that will produce immediate results. These types of decisions are generally of little value but are immediately visible to the grunts.

Visible evidence of high level managerial skills in action is a good thing. If they group enough of these non-critical decisions together it appears that we really have a manager that produces results.

Working with less critical decisions is also not so demanding on management resources. There is clearly less stress and less opportunity to make major mistakes. Managers then finish their daily routines feeling much more satisfied that they have justified their positions.

Going back to a previous issue with college management, the critical decision on changing the school name is a prime

example of Micro management. First we have to have high level meetings to see if anybody else is interested. If the meeting was called by top management of course the flunkies have to agree.

Then we can occupy the time of many managerial type people to work on name possibilities. The selection of the name can get to be a really serious issue. Imagine the Strategic meetings and sub-committees that could get involved with this.

Once the name is selected we can tie up a lot of management people on the plan to make the conversion. For example there has to be major management commitment on managing school apparel. How do we get rid of the old stuff, design of the new stuff, purchasing, etc? This project could tie up a lot of managerial resources, all for something that did not even remotely fall into the category of necessary. In the meantime these managers have been taken from normal activities such as budget concerns, curriculum development, in-service training, resource management, etc. If these managers have not been taken from normal activities, then what are their duties when the name change is finally complete? Is there a group of managers available just for stupid projects?

### **The world of consultants**

It has been said it takes two things to be a consultant - grey hair and hemorrhoids. The grey hair makes you look distinguished. The hemorrhoids make you look concerned.

The use of consultants offers one big advantage to management, and that is, if it's screwed up, blame the consultants. Just recommending the use of consultants shows superior management thinking. It shows that they are firmly committed to getting the job done right. It is interesting to see the number of consultants that are actually ex-employees hired by their still-working buddies.

The fact that the price of the consultants exceeds the cost of the project is not an issue. Everyone expects consulting fees to be enormous. If the price was cheap nobody would accept the consultant input as usable. It is actually a nice set-up. The consultants give their recommendations and then management can do whatever they want with it...including nothing at all. Management can easily dodge the bullet by stating the recommendations did not fall within budget guidelines.

From the grunt perspective there is often a feeling of being a dim bulb. Obviously your fifteen years of doing this job does not qualify you for giving input so they hired an outside professional. Forget about the fact they have never done this job, never used our product or seen it used, and have never been in our facility. What is important is that their hourly wage exceeds my day's wages.

### **Mission/Vision statement**

This topic is absolutely precious. Can anyone imagine how this world floundered around for so many years without a Mission/Vision statement? Finally someone saw the light and we now have a sense of direction. A concept of this caliber had to have been initiated by an individual with many acronyms behind his name suggesting well above average intellect. Now industry can finally relate to the general public what their real goal is. I'm not claiming to be the sharpest knife in the drawer but don't all Mission statements simply state that they are going to be the best whatever in the world?

Some have very eloquent verbiage. Others are direct to the point. All that I have seen state that they will produce the best product, provide the best service, or provide the best care. However in the end they state nothing more than you would naturally expect from this firm.

Developing a Mission/Vision statement is a perfect place to involve management that don't really have any other responsibility. To complete this task with any respectable outcome will require more than one top management gathering. It's hard to imagine the headaches and frustration involved in developing a really good Mission/Vision statement.

I was once involved in developing a Mission/Vision statement. My involvement was not because of my superior intellect but because every employee except for the telephone receptionist was required to be in attendance. There were over one hundred people in attendance, and after one full eight hour day we got it just right. Now it sits proudly displayed for the whole world to see and what a difference it has made in our daily operations....ZERO.

Top management stands 100% behind the Mission/Vision statement necessity. I think it's because the top management from other businesses think it's necessary so our management have to go along with it. They think it's necessary because they think you think it's necessary.

This Mission/Vision concept has been around for quite a while now. Can anyone imagine the disastrous affect from a potential customer entering a business and discovering that business did not have a Mission/Vision statement?

### **Re-inventing the wheel**

Isn't somebody already doing this? This is a question that never seems to be asked. Management will spend considerable manpower and money to develop a solution for a problem that other businesses have had a solution for years.

Unfortunately there is sometimes an ego to satisfy regardless of the price. If management can introduce a concept or method, and finally get it to work, they now look like the ultimate solution to the world of management. Copying the technique from another work site is unacceptable, even if available for a reasonable price.

We have to disregard the fact that an existing technique is currently available, time tested, reasonably priced, and universal support teams are available. If the manager is a low profile type (cubicle in back corner, no direct subordinates, nobody knows his name, etc.), then this would be the method of choice (re-invent the wheel) to climb the ladder of success.

### **Mid-management**

Not all discontent is at the grunt level. Mid-management has their own collection of management concerns. Allowing mid-management personnel to do their thing is often a serious concern. It is embarrassing to assign a task and then have a higher authority override the assignment, especially without consulting you first. This generally brings out the "What am I doing here?" thoughts and you hope it's an isolated case.

The worst-case override is when demonstrating a technique to a sub-ordinate and having higher authority say in effect no, this is how you do it. The term "Bust your bubble" definitely comes into play here. The embarrassment and self-image recovery is at a serious level. This situation is even worse when you know your method is industry adopted, time-tested, and the correct method. After the top Bozo leaves you have to make the choice, do it my way (the correct way) or follow the top command.

There is another area in the world of management that makes it less than a really nice day, and that is recognizing turf levels. When personnel are appointed as managers for a certain business level they take responsibility for that level. That usually

includes at least an opportunity to be involved in employee selection and termination. Attempting to produce average or hopefully above average results utilizing personnel selected or scheduled by higher authority may not make for a happy day.

Scheduling usually requires an in-depth knowledge of the work assignment and personal qualifications. Utilizing individual skills maximizes production and in most cases maximizes employee job satisfaction. In many cases employee personal needs also determine the final schedule. We should never have to hear Just let me do my job!

There is one final blurb on the mid-management thing, and that is the feeling that high level management doesn't seem to think you know how to do the job. Actually they do feel confident in your ability but have difficulty letting go of the reins. This may be a new position, production may be at a crisis level, there is legal action pending, a business sale is on the horizon, etc. The result is the mid-management is questioned about their decisions, high management remains visible in the immediate area, and it becomes difficult to demonstrate that I really do know how to do my job.

## **Management can't be wrong**

### ***Blame***

This one is easy. If it works, management did it. If it didn't work, the grunt did it. It can't get any simpler than that. It is interesting however when it doesn't work, to see how easy it is to blame the lower level. The old the buck stops here usually refers to how far up the ladder can this go. When blame is involved however it works backwards. The replaceable grunt that can't defend himself is always a good place to stop.

### ***Unmistakable***

People make mistakes...managers don't. Well, we know better but grunts aren't supposed to know. So what happens when the word is passed down, and it's wrong?

First option is to suck it up and like smashing your finger the pain will eventually go away. Just work around the mistake and correct as appropriate. Special attention must be given to not bust the manager's bubble. Of course the down-side here is the productive manager wannabe will continue his movement up the ladder of success.

Second option is to schmooze the manager so he don't feel bad. First he must be gently told his decision wasn't really off-base, but there are some other options available. You could say something kind and reassuring like I probably would have made the same decision. Then walk away before you tell him that was a really, really stupid decision.

The third option is to simply tell the manager he screwed up. Of course this is career suicide. This manager exists because there was something found superior to your physical/mental make-up. Disputing a decision from such an individual suggests lack of common sense, at least from the management point of view.

There is always a slim chance that telling a manager his decision was not the best will place you on a rather intelligent level. This could be accented by using appropriate facts and figures suggesting rational argument. Accepting your argument would place the manager into a desirable category. Unfortunately we don't have a place for such an individual in this book.

## **Operating on Auto-Pilot**

This is a fairly common situation. You are going about your business doing the job expected and the boss is in another world, physically or mentally. One example could be the family member manager mentioned earlier. Yes, I will go to work every day, well at least a lot of the time, but a person at my level has a lot of additional responsibilities. It is important to stay involved with the community, and most of them have golf club memberships so that's where I have to do my involvement. Then there are the daily luncheons, Manager support groups, etc,

Then there are the managers that actually are in the building but you're not aware of it. You just have to wonder if all those meetings they attend contribute at all to the success of the business or are the result of higher level managers trying to justify their time. Taking a manager out of his normal operating position for a meeting requires a very well trained, dedicated group of employees to take up the slack.

A manager missing in action has good and bad aspects. On the good side, if there is a major screw-up you have a chance to recover before he shows up and nobody will know the difference. You also don't have someone always in your face. On the bad side, there are jobs that require a manager to be present or close by. When the manager is not present the employees have to unofficially make decisions, take care of safety issues, etc.

## **Personal traits**

### ***Hygiene***

A manager that is allergic to daily showers really presents a serious problem. Those employees that are forced to work in close proximity with these managers are so screwed. A male manager in this condition is bad. A female manager with this problem falls well below expectations. The majority of the world expects females to lead in personal hygiene. It's kinda funny how excited you can get when you hear the manager state he has plans to go swimming that night.

### ***Smell enhancers***

Of course there is an easy solution for the manager that is allergic to water, and that is a bottle of smell good stuff. Worst case scenario is the aroma that lingers long after they have left the area. This level also causes eyes to burn and a number of other medical conditions. One of the worst things that can happen to you here, is having to share an area for overcoats, lab coats, or whatever. That way you can tell they are in the building just by the smell. You also get to enjoy their presence long after they leave.

On the other end of the spectrum is the light touch, just enough to mix with the B.O. but not cover it. The chances of them picking an aroma you are willing to put up with are slim to none. The final product is an aroma with just the right balance to make you want to puke.

I guess another topic on smell would be the bad breath thing. This involves two different concepts. One, the manager knows he has it but doesn't think it's that bad, Two, he doesn't know he has it.

If he knows he has some level of bad breath but does nothing about it, it may be he thinks his other attributes override the problem. For example, his charm would surely make you not even think about the noxious fumes emitted during the flow of verbal wisdom. If he doesn't know he has bad breath, who is going to break the news?

### ***Flatulence***

The last topic involved with personal traits is the most disgusting and that is Flatulence, passing gas, ok farting. One

individual told me of her experience with this manager. She worked in a large, well respected corporation where there were many employees working in cubicles. Her manager visited with her on a regular basis (primarily because he had nothing else to do), and without the slightest reservation, farted in her cubicle! This happened on a regular basis. A real pig has four legs but that would be the only difference.

The lack of any personal reaction whatsoever from this manager indicated this was a normal plus you received for working for him. Working under those conditions is as bad as it gets. Unfortunately, this manager is the same individual that recommends your wage increases, approves your vacation time, decides your work assignments, evaluates you, etc.

### **Misc.**

There are lots of other much smaller personal trait issues that collectively skew the manager's effectiveness. One example would be helping himself to the rolls or baked goods provided by an employee, for their fellow employees. Of course there is no attempt by the manager to occasionally become the provider.

The manager may find the employee break room a favorite place to hang out. This is the place and time where employees get to talk about the managers. It's also a temporary retreat from constant supervision. Just stay out of my face!

Depending on the size of the business, the break room may also be maintained by the employees. A manager that uses the microwave or toaster certainly doesn't have time to clean up his mess. Managing in the break room may not be a good thing.

Although sexual harassment issues have been well contained, there is still ample opportunity to make life just a little more uncomfortable. Many jobs require working physically close with others and you may find yourself getting a little more help than others.

As the size of the workplace decreases, the chance of corrective action decreases. If the offending manager is also the owner of the business you can no you can't....you're screwed.

### **Promises, Promises. Promises**

This is a tough one. This involves managers that actually do have excellent managerial skills but often do not follow through with their plans. So the manager says ya know, I'm going to and you get excited and think it's a great idea. Unfortunately, that's the last you ever hear of it. You can refresh their memory with it but it's the old in one ear and out the other routine.

It could be that they have so many irons in the fire that they can't concentrate on any one issue...kinda like a Teflon brain...nothing sticks. This is a manager that really is gifted and therefore is given opportunity to proceed without much hassle. It's like opening the floodgates of talent but instead of flowing into a specific channel it's allowed to flow anywhere it wants. Constant reminders appear to be the only solution here.

Some managers like to take on the role of an idea warehouse. They can come up with the ideas and then expect someone to latch on and get it done. This is an ideal world but the get 'er done group is pretty limited.

This topic is almost the opposite of Micro-Management. Here the primary idea is exciting and a chance to show real skills and intelligence. However the implementation requires grunt involvement and that is more work for the manager. It also is not the level he wants to be operating at.

Again, if this manager is operating at the top of the organizational structure, his activities will continue unchecked. If he operates at a lower level the grunts may possibly see corrective action if allowed input on his evaluation forms. This type of manager is not a bad thing....just needs a wake-up call.

### **Replaced with part-timers**

The plan of attack here is to inform you that your position has been eliminated so they give you the boot. Then your former co-workers inform you that there is a new part-timer that is doing some of what you used to do. Then another part-timer appears on the scene and is also doing some of your work.

Of course anyone can see the economic benefits for the business. The new part-timers may not be eligible for benefits, or reduced benefits, and of course will be working for much less pay than you were getting. The business also has the benefit of more scheduling flexibility with two employees capable of doing the same job. But what about me?

### **I don't wanna be a manager**

So now you have a chance to be one of them. After all the bull sessions and other discussions on well if I was the manager...., now it is your turn. Armed with all the input from the other grunts over the years, you are now ready to make your mark....well maybe not.

I can think of a number of people that were very well qualified but turned down the chance to become a manager. There are several reasons for rejecting promotion. The change is somewhat similar to the change from living as a teenager to becoming a parent. This is a whole different world.

The first reason that comes to mind is the obvious forced wedge between you and your friends. These are the same people that you have enjoyed many bull sessions with, creating material for this book. Now you are one of them. Many friendships go beyond the pay clock. It presents a difficult situation to enjoy time with close friends and have them report to you the next day.

Another reason for rejecting promotion may be due to increase in stress. Although promotion usually means more pay, it also may mean many more headaches. Many people just want to do the job and go home. I don't want the hassle of taking crap home with me, whether it is unfinished paperwork or just how am I gonna... type worries. A hassle-free environment is worth more to many people than the prestige of a promotion.

The last reason for rejecting promotion that I can think of is, fear of failure. With all the faults identified by you and your co-workers with current managers, are you certain you will rise above that level? You are good at what you do now, but management?

### **Don't you have anything else to do?**

When you first started your job you thought it was really nice that your boss is so willing to personally help you along. Each day he spends a lot of time with you, talking about things that have nothing to do with your job, and you assume it's just an attempt to help you feel more comfortable.

After about a month you would like to find a way to let him know that I'm ok now. I'm now very comfortable with what I'm doing but I'm actually kind of held back from doing my best while talking to you.

I guess we could kick it up a notch with the "know it all" manager. Here we have a manager that is daily sucking up your productive time by telling you how to do your job. Yes, on the first day I really appreciated his taking the time to give detail instructions on my job. But now I think I could actually say I know how to do it as well as the manager does. So its time for him to take a hike, leave me alone, just let me do my job.

Of course after a while you just have to wonder, doesn't he really have anything else to do? Is this manager letting his job requirements fall by the wayside just to spend time with me? Is this a personal thing? Does he think I'm handicapped? Does he think I'm not making the grade? Why are you spending all this time with me? Even though you are my manager, you are rapidly becoming a giant pain in the butt! Then you realize, this is the way it's going to be. This anchor is here for the duration. How do you tell your manager, go away...you are bothering me?

### **I also am a human being**

It sometimes seems that as though your value as a human being is inversely proportional to the size of the business. In a small business your manager is much more likely to know your birthday, the name of your significant other, the names and ages of your kids, what kind of car you drive, vacation plans, etc. I realize that can be carried to the extreme. However I think most people would appreciate a little concern about you personally.

There are events in our daily lives that can have a serious negative effect on the job performance. If an individual close to you had a sudden negative change in their status it may have an impact on job performance. This would include a death, discovery of serious illness, divorce, accident, etc. Those that have never experienced the love of a pet could not possibly understand the emotional disaster with the loss of a pet.

We understand that life must go on and business cannot change because of your status. However in times of personal crisis, even if the manager didn't really give a rats, he could at least ask and show concern. Flowers sent to the hospital, funeral home, etc. would probably get a good return on the investment. Within reasonable limits, a little more tolerance for a few more personal phone calls, requests for additional time off, etc. would certainly elevate the status of the manager.

On the plus side, sharing good news from a grunt would be another nice manager thing. This would include marriage announcement, birth, kids success stories (school, boy scouts, sports, etc.), or maybe just finding out the pregnancy test came back negative.

On the business side, a manager could do real damage scheduling you personally for activities such as counting inventory, moving the office, etc. on a day that was well announced in advance for a special family activity. It would be really bad if the employee discovered that the date was selected to not interfere with the manager's personal off-duty hours. Even if the manager was faking it, giving the impression the he cares about you as a human being makes the work day alarm clock a little more tolerable.

### **Give me the tools to do the job**

Most of us really would like to do a good job. The benefits include a better chance for wage increase, advancement, and just a feeling of increased self-worth. Ok, so I've decided to give this job my best shot but I'm going to need a little help. I'm going to need the correct materials, tools, time, training, and support to do the job I'd like to do.

If you want me to build a good product, provide me with good materials. I can't build quality furniture from scrap pallet wood. Using screws that are just a little too short or the wrong type, forces me to improvise. Splicing wires because they aren't long enough takes time and causes problems. If you want high quality, give me high quality to work with.

The use of the right tool could cover a lot of ground. Forcing me to use a crescent wrench to tighten bolts all day results in loose connections and skinned knuckles. Using a pipe wrench for a hammer is not going to increase productivity. Not only do I need the correct tool, but the tool should be usable for the job. Using a saw blade that smokes every time I use it may suggest it's served its time and ready for a new one.

Most businesses would like maximum production from their employees but please allow adequate time for me to get up to speed. I will require thorough training and that does not include the old "you shouldn't have a problem." Turn me loose at the same time you would any other employee and that would be when I have demonstrated sufficient knowledge to do the job by myself.

After I have completed training I would still expect support from management at the same levels the others receive. Please be available and willing to answer questions, especially during my initial start-up time. Allow me to be the best employee you've ever had.

### **What a waste of time**

I'm sure there are many employees that were assigned tasks that fall into the category of "What the...." Assuming the average employee has an IQ at least above the level of a rock, it is easy to recognize tasks that have questionable value. This could be an office worker requested to generate an unusual report. The employee knows from years of experience that the information provided by this report is of no practical value. The manager is relatively new and is desperate to make his mark.

We will assume you were not hired to sit around and wait for a stupid task assignment which means you probably already have a full plate. The assignment of a stupid task then is more than irritating. Somehow you are going to have to make time for the additional task. Your options are; don't do one of your normal assignments, or add a little extra time to your day to get it done. You can only hope that your skills at producing the report are noticed and the value thing can be something the big guys can worry about.

### **And in closing.....**

I would like to state again that the vast majority of managers have been selected because of their very desirable skills. Management usually is not an easy task and carries with it the potential for stress the grunts may not appreciate.

Upper level personnel involved in education have a very difficult job. Attempting to provide quality education with current budget constraints and demands from the public is a job many would shy away from. Those that have reached the highest level in the world of education (Doctorate) should be commended for their efforts. They have demonstrated an incredible commitment to excellence in terms of study, time, expense, and commitment.

Without question there are managers in the business world today that represent the finest in leadership. Exceptional workplaces are often spotlighted in the news media and the rest of us can only dream about employment in those facilities.

Exceptional workplaces are directly tied to exceptional management. This type of management demonstrates above average skill in human relations, business knowledge, interpersonal skills, and management skills.

Again this book references only those very few that don't have an elevator that goes to the top floor, not the sharpest knife in the drawer, one brick short, all missile...no warhead, a few French fries short of a Happy Meal, sort of like an inverse Einstein, his puzzle is missing a few pieces, gates are down...lights are flashing...but train isn't coming, the cheese slid off his cracker...

## **About the Author**

I would like to state my academic background so I can eliminate all "well maybe if you had tried college" type comments. I have a Masters degree in Computer Science and Business. I have enough credits beyond that to have earned a Doctorate but could not convince myself it was worth it. In addition, I have successfully completed a one year Electronics Technician program (courtesy U.S.M.C), a two-year Paramedic program, and a home study course in Locksmithing. I did the Locksmithing thing because I had some leftover College G.I. bill money after I completed college.

I also want to make it clear that I have had the pleasure of working with some excellent managers. I have some good friends with high level degrees (Doctorate) and none of them qualify for inclusion in this book. This book only focuses on those individuals that cause us to re-think management qualifications.

I have finally reached retirement age so I can now put into printed words the thoughts that I have accumulated throughout my working career. As most people I have had a variety of jobs during my pursuit of old age. It all started at age 15 working part-time as a grunt at a motel. Since I was the only employee, management problems were not an issue.

Then I entered full-time into the world of corporate America. I again was a grunt but this time in a manufacturing plant, performing bottom of the corporate ladder tasks. When I say BOTTOM, I mean it. One of my tasks was removing rotting dead rats from under the building (I guess they couldn't handle the poison). At this level of employment I was too far down the ladder to really evaluate management decisions.

The next employer for me was the U.S. Marine Corps. Now I'm beginning to see some room for discussion. At the time I joined, judges were telling convicted bad guys, enlist in the Marine Corps or go to jail....your choice. Well some of these newly enlisted people were not necessarily from the top of the academic pile. However, some of these people eventually got promoted and became in effect, managers. What is surprising is that, generally speaking, these managers were really good at their job. Military life certainly gave me a new perspective on management skills. I do want to add at this point that today's Marine Corps has much higher standards and they represent the finest team effort available in their line of work.

After completing my military tour of duty, I returned to corporate America. This time I found work as an Electronics Technician and began to find that this management thing is kind of like an infection....nobody is immune!

After a short time I found employment with a major manufacturing company. Because of extreme good fortune my employer realized my I.Q. was slightly higher than plant life and sent me to Computer Programming school. It was the biggest break of my working career. However because of corporate policy, they allowed me to work as a Programmer, but not receive the pay until someone else died or quit. After six months, I bailed out and got my first white collar job working in a contract programming sweat shop. This opportunity offered yet another interesting view of management skills.

I finally found an escape from the sweatshop with employment in the world of education. Here I found an opportunity to teach others the Programming skills that I learned in my 20 years of work crammed into four years of employment (sweatshop). It is also here that I finally accumulated sufficient time for retirement (26 years). Management within the educational world offers sufficient material to write a book by itself.

While enjoying the direction provided by management in the world of education I decided to try an additional vocation, the world of Emergency Medicine. I became a Registered Emergency Medical Technician (EMT). I then took on secondary employment as a combination Tow truck driver/EMT. Here I was definitely operating at the grunt level. Working at this level opened up new opportunities for management evaluation.

Before retiring from my teaching position I enrolled in an evening program to advance myself to the level of Paramedic. After retiring from teaching, I worked full-time hours as a Paramedic. I worked as a Paramedic for about five years. Then, as happens to so many Paramedics, my back finally gave out.

The magic of surgery for me was a complete success. I was ready to hit the streets again. However, my surgeon said, "I ain't fixing that twice so give it up!" Luckily a local small town hospital opened up a relatively new opportunity by hiring Paramedics to work in the Emergency Room (I was probably the oldest Paramedic in the world). The hospital gave me the best years of my working career. I had hoped to finish at least a year there but finished well over eight years before I decided to finally take time to smell the roses.

I now have had a lifetime of experience to honestly evaluate the management skills presented to me during my prime working years. The quality of these management skills is the focus of this book. Hopefully those currently in management positions will read this material and consider the potential impact on their current management style.

**Management: The other side**

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