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Hedonistic Management

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Why another paper on management? Or why another theory of management? Because the state of the management art is not coping with the rising frustration index of the knowledge workers, the people who work with data. As more sophisticated systems are developed, automation, computer applications, and cybernetics develop, we humans are threatened by incessant change. The frustration index soars when the interfaces between contractors on the Apollo program dictate either enforced idleness or at least pursuit of mark-time or catch-up work of much lower motivational appeal than the mission. Even a stretch-out in schedule can lower morale. Take the heat off, and the same person regards the same task as beneath his capability. Then feet drag and mouths run, helping to lower morale.

So, the built-in negative motivation that is inherent in our technology demands new positive creative third force psychology as an anti-biotic. The prescription calls for hedonism.

It may surprise you to know that hedonism has a long history and did not arrive on the scene with the centerfold of Playboy. Around 400 BC the Greeks formed the idea that only feelings of pleasure make up a “good life.” Later Aristotle recognized pleasure as a psychological sign of natural growth and pain as a felt indication of frustration.

Our headlong plunge into the computer age and into automation has made our planners experts in the psychology of hardware. We have been forced to examine the minute facets of all the functions and tasks of humans that our tremendous technology has removed from weary human backs and brains.

Now isn't it time to take an equally penetrating look at our most prevalent software-humans? Aren't they worthy of detailed analysis in their working environment? After all, the dumbest of us are infinitely superior to a computer, because of our infinitely greater number of random connections. We can turn mental handsprings around the most heuristic computer that ever has or will be designed.

It is this very asset that is continuously, asiduously plowed under, stamped out and kicked into sullen submission by 99% of employers today.

Let's take a very unsophisticated, naive look at human programming. After all, it's about time we humans demanded equal time with our hardware compatriot. A tremendous amount of effort goes into minimizing the "garbage in - garbage out" computer corollary.

I would like to call your attention to the fact that you all, personally, collectively, and corporately, nurture millions of very wonderful, intricately constructed mechanisms which consistently produce a wide variety of garbage. Unlike mechanical garbage, this product can impair the function of entire homes, shops, stores, factories and even governments. I refer to your utter disregard of the inherent programming of humans. This inherent program is hedonistic.

Many eminent authorities have been pointing out that while mankind's most sensitive nerve is the pocket book nerve, the treatment of this nerve must be constant. This treatment goes by different names, like merit review, cost of living, inflation, or even perhaps guaranteed annual wage.

All of this time we ignore the built-in program - hedonism. We do worse. We try to destroy it, or at best turn it to garbage production.

So let's look at one of the average, standard model software computers in your office - a five foot, eight inch, 160 pound, 35 year old father of two kids. Before you hired him you went through quite a ritual. Most of this ritual was vestigial. It was designed not to rock the boat, personal or corporate. Many additives went to make up this assurance of smooth water and status quo. To begin with, he certainly must have come from a college which placed a premium on conformity, or at best on ability to regurgitate reams of facts that passed from the notebook and/or tape recorder of the instructor (the professor was off consulting) to the notebook/tape recorder of your employee with more or less fidelity in the playback, but certainly devoid of any feedback on actual conditions or applications.

Now that you have yourself a good conformist, with an engineering degree, you proceed to reduce him to a clerk by giving him bits and pieces, fragments of former satisfying jobs, to do. The original satisfying job may have died with the industrial revolution or soon thereafter. The division of labor that came with mass production has deprived millions of people of a sense of achievement in their work.

Now can the hope of better things, the enthusiasm, the excitement, which is often present at the employment interview be encouraged and preserved? In my opinion this is a product of man's inherent hedonistic programming. Your new employee romanticizes his new job. He hears only what he wants to hear. At this juncture he isn't usually looking for trouble,
unpleasantness, incompatibility, and would certainly never characterize himself as lazy, inept and inadequate for the job. At this time he is an incurable romantic, seeing only goodness and putting his best foot forward. The scene changes. Your indoctrination period is probably pretty boring, but let's go on to the immediate supervisor. No matter what the company policies are, the immediate supervisor is the one person who makes this the best or the worst company in the world to work for.

This chain of supervision, all the way to top management, should closely examine the hedonistic program implanted in each employee. Every human has this pleasure seeking "gene" in his hereditary package. Perhaps as Herzberg believes, we have been pampering the wrong "jeans." Money is not the supreme motivator; it is only an open invitation, if not a birthright demand, for more money.

Herzberg lists five factors as strong determiners of job satisfaction: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility and advancement. Note that all of these are hedonistic. He lists hygiene factors (preventive and environmental) as major dissatisfiers. These are company policy and administration, supervision, salary, interpersonal relations and working conditions. When Herzberg downgrades the importance of his "hygiene factors" in motivation, did he not ignore the most fundamental and important of all aspects of hygiene, that of providing a favorable environment for hedonism, the most dominant character trait of the human race?

This is a time of unrest. This is a time of self assertion. We see it in youth; we see it in race conflict, and in war just one button short of oblivion. As technology spins its vast global and space web, unless serious counter-measures are adopted, the frustration index is going to rise astronomically, and with it, all forms of strife.

Now, let's return to Joe Engineer and his immediate supervisor. Remember - Joe is programmed hedonistically. Enter the supervisor (also programmed hedonistically). The supervisor must be trained in the heuristic approach. He must be skilled in problem solving, in seeking answers. He must present the immediate task at hand to Joe in a fair, objective manner. He must be sure, yes positively sure that he is communicating with Joe. Two main obstacles are semantics, and the fact that Joe only hears what he wants to hear. The best test for effective communication is to ask Joe to repeat the main points of your discussion to you. You will be amazed at the frequency with which Joe tells you, with a perfectly straight face and in all sincerity and desire to please, that he is going to do the exact opposite of your instructions.

OK. Now you have communicated and have been understood - or have you? Joe was busy thinking of a better way to do the job. So he missed half of what you said, and his hedonistic programming got clobbered because you want it done your way. Either you implied this and permitted no discussion, or you cut short his discussion.

Joe wants to build an empire, but if you approach him right, he will settle for a sand castle. Just be careful about kicking it down. If possible listen to Joe's ideas. Let him do the job in the manner most comfortable to him. Encourage Joe's tendency to be intelligently, creatively lazy. Some one has said that laziness, not necessity, is the mother of invention. How else did all these millions of people get to ride and fly around sitting down?

Let me borrow an illustration from a man who attended one of my quality control courses at Kennedy Space Center.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Overdo it</th>
<th>Do it</th>
<th>Forget it</th>
<th>Kick it</th>
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Motivation Scale

40% of today's employees contemptuously disregard the success of their employer. 30% passively exist without rocking the boat. 20% do the job in an acceptable manner, while 10% are looking for crucifixion by obnoxiously and expensively overdoing the job. Granted this is a light touch, can we afford anything even approximating this situation?

Another light touch. Once the original Henry Ford stood where the Gate 4 Road passes under the pressed steel building at his sprawling River Rouge plant (168,000 employees). A bold tourist asked him "Just about how many people do you have working for you now? Ford?" Ford's reply was "About half of them, I guess!"

Can our economy, can our militant society survive this universally ignored tremendous asset programmed in us all at birth - hedonism - the desire to extract pleasure from every minute of the "good life?"

Every attempt to improve a situation will be met with some rebuffs. One of my supervisors up north would cut short some of my proposals for a different way of doing things with the remark that this method was "a whim." This was my automatic cue that my supervisor had already proposed this method to his boss and had been turned down. A few hedge clauses are always handy. This "whim" had another virtue, "while not gaining your point in execution of the job, it was a subtle clue that you and your supervisor were thinking alike, and that your idea at least gained acceptance, if not implementation."
Now is the time to do what comes naturally - the pursuit of pleasure - hedonism. Harness this inherent quality in all humans. Learn third force psychology of ego involvement, purposefulness and striving, self theory.

Most important of all listen to each self, not for what you want to hear but how the employee feels about the job. Job improvement - job enrichment - comes from within. Who knows more about the job than the man doing it? Give him a much bigger voice and satisfaction in his work.

The key to motivation is hedonistic management.

BIBLIOGRAPHY