

The Cure For Common Management

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The Cure for Common Management

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Introducing The Cure

A young lad is playing ball with his father in the front yard. They appear the picture of health.

Yet this father is a modern manager. He often lies awake nights wondering how he missed some critical aspect of an assignment. He sees his rivals being given the assignments that lead toward promotion, while he is given the more difficult employees and is being directed to less visible efforts. He sees others being groomed to pass by him on their way to the choice positions in the organization.

His heart sometimes races when he feels that familiar knot in his stomach. He knows that the threat he feels is stress, but he also feels powerless to do anything about it. He has to ask himself the unanswerable question of whether it is so bad that he should change his career path.

The stress of the modern manager is not illusion. It is real, and it seems unavoidable to those who take part in our modern management efforts.

This stress is not just for the up-and-coming manager. His boss faces the same sort of challenges. He has several subordinates who are scrambling to promote themselves, often at the expense of the business. He has been told that this is a matter of concern to his boss. He wonders how he can keep this group of individualists working together when they receive so little reward for really sharing in their efforts. He was there himself and survived the stress; he understands their situation.

He now sees that his own promotion is likely to depend upon encouraging the same sort of stress in his subordinates. He managed to get through, but several of his friends did not. He doesn't want to be the cause of his subordinates' problems.

The next higher boss is the local chief manager, a man of considerable ability and great patience. He is not immune either. He has various performance goals placed upon him, and must seek

performance through subordinates who are intent on their own needs. The organization seems to stagnate unless he is constantly prodding it into action. His directives fade as they are communicated down into the organization, and he has to renew them to keep work progressing. His subordinates want to direct the resources of the business to efforts where they design their own improvements even where no real savings result. These are the efforts where they are most likely to receive the credit. It is all so reasonable, and yet it puts them cross to his purposes.

His management improvement program seems to be working just the way it should, but there is no real improvement, and the senior board is hinting their concern that he might not be applying it the way it was designed.

The Organic Business

A business is made up of people. It is, in itself, an organism, with most of the properties that are appropriate for other living things. This includes illnesses. We use the term “disease” for any condition that challenges the normal life functions of an organic entity. For example, we call it cancer when some part of the body begins to grow independently from the rest of the organism.

We have similar organizational threats to business organisms. When some part of a business grows without regard to the operation of the larger business, it is called suboptimization, and can have cancer-like symptoms.

Even as the human manager reacts to stress by developing stress disease, so the organic business reacts to stress with its own set of symptoms. A stressful business environment encourages stress in individual managers.

Business health is intimately tied to the personal feelings and behaviors of the human beings who make up and operate the business. Through promoting healthy behaviors by managers, we also see to the welfare of the business. By handling organization-level challenges to business operations, we improve the performance enviro-

Life Comparison

<i>Organic Being</i>	<i>Indicator for</i>	<i>Business Organization</i>
Born, Get Old and Die	Life Itself	Created, Get Old, and terminate
Breathe, Eat and Work	Respiration	Sell Product and Gather Income
Organic Health	Health	Business Health
Loss of Function	Illness	Loss of Function
Gain in Size and Ability	Growth	Gain in Size And Ability

Figure 0 - 1

onment of individual managers. The health of one depends upon the health of the other.

The Modern Management Syndrome

We can see when a person grows old because they have a set of symptoms. There is a wrinkling of the skin, forgetfulness, loss of vision, shuffling walk, and whitening of body hair. When we know and understand the cause for a set of widely diverse symptoms, we address them jointly by the name of the cause. All the symptoms of growing old are called “aging.”

Where we have a recognizable set of symptoms but there is no known cause, we call that collection of symptoms a syndrome. Until the cause is known, there is no obvious way to treat the syndrome for a cure, but only treatment for its symptoms.

Consider a manager placed in charge of a management improvement effort with direction to implement an accepted improvement process. An immediate challenge arises where the manager over the operating area is already responsible for process efficiency. Efficiency of operation is a part of the job of the one who supervises over the process. The more successful the program manager appears to be at promoting efficiency, the less effective the operating manager is likely to appear at doing that part of his or her job. The success of the program manager results in challenging other manager’s efficiency efforts!

Is it any wonder that most managers are focused on getting efficient by their own personally selected means? We commonly use a program-based approach to improving management efficiency. This causes stress by promoting destructive internal competitions.

A management engineer sees many such symptoms through examining manager motivations. We have layer upon layer of managers being rewarded for supporting a superior management effort. The support requested of them is often not “gaining performance through others,” the definition of management.

Our Modern Management Syndrome consists of various symptoms arising where good-management practices have been abandoned to see to other goals. These symptoms arise wherever the basic logic of management has been replaced with procedures that approach productive results as something to gain through “non-management” efforts.

The term syndrome is appropriate. Modern management masks these symptoms by presenting the avoidance of, and redirection from, good management as being a source for good management. Except in the examination of its symptoms, the cause of the Modern Management Syndrome is invisible to the modern manager.

Treatment for the Syndrome

The treatment for the Modern Management Syndrome is basic. It includes actions that return the focus of management efforts to the productive purpose. This can relieve not only the stress on individual managers, but also the stress on the larger organization. The treatment is by enhancing activities in accord good-management practices.

This work identifies places and situations where managers are now discouraged from performing management, or are encouraged to abandon management to see to “other” needs. This work identifies places and situations where managers are encouraged to abandon good-management practices in order to perform “other” processes that are supposed to yield effective management.

The Syndrome arises from avoiding management; The Cure from putting emphasis back on it.

The cure is obvious from this simple description of the syndrome. For each distraction or abandonment, there is a corresponding reemphasis on gaining productive results. The cure is through application of good management; it is through providing alternatives to actions and approaches that promote ineffective management.

These fundamental “cures” fall neatly into a few categories based on various aspects of known good-management practices and well-accepted management understandings.

Cure 1: Management is ...

The first curative rule is the definition of management. This most obvious statement proves necessary because of confusion between management and supervision.

The weak modern understanding of management is: “*Management is whatever managers commonly do.*” The lack of focus on

any performance requirement is obvious. This definition encourages efforts that contribute little to business success.

Curative actions replace this weak understanding of management with the well-accepted definition: *“Management is gaining a productive result through the efforts of subordinates.”*

Because of its importance in understanding the limits of management, supervision is defined: *“Maintaining the value of business resources and processes.”* Supervision is separate from management, being derived from words that translate to “over-seeing.” Most of the ineffective behaviors encouraged for modern managers arise from addressing lower-priority functions, such as supervision, as if they are the central purpose for manager efforts.

Cure 2: Starting with Self-Management

Another weak modern management understanding is that management is getting others to do work. This promotes “quarter-back management.” Under the influence of the Modern Management Syndrome, the manager hands off responsibility to subordinates, and steps aside.

While this may appear to minimize the manager’s personal responsibility, it also minimizes the purpose for having a manager. Consistently acting on this understanding can make the manager feel useless. It can promote senior manager jealousy directed toward his or her more successful subordinates, leading to severe stress for both.

The effective viewpoint for management can be observed in the modern assembly plant. It is in this environment where the product is obvious and the purposes clearly defined by delivery of that product. Production managers provide the effective workplace. They maintain a working environment that promotes efficient performance. Managers establish the efficient process, and train the workers in the method of performance. Managers see to the tools, jigs and fixtures that keep the work moving through its performance cycle. Without production managers performing these support services, the work would be inefficient, and the product would likely suffer.

The cure for the Modern Management Syndrome is through applying the good-management concept. This is an acceptance of a manager’s vital and necessary part in assuring the productivity of those who are managed. Effective management begins with the manager performing self-assigned work that defines and supports the

productive efforts of subordinates. Good management includes recognizing the essential work that only managers can perform.

Cure 3: Seeing to Management Essentials

Knowledge of management essentials is missing in the Syndrome. Essentials are masked where management is addressed as: “*Managers do whatever is required to gain performance.*” This denies that there are any essentials.

The curative rule is promoting the definition for management already addressed: “*Management is gaining a productive result through the efforts of subordinates.*” The essentials are obvious:

1. **Responsibility** -- Something for the manager to gain.
2. **Performance Potential** -- Resources to be used in performance.
3. **Authority** -- Ability to direct subordinate resources.

Cure 4: Apply Good-management Practice

The essentials for good-management practice are also well recognized:

Responsibility – Assign responsibility for a productive result.

Performance Potential – Assure resources for the effort.

Authority – Support the assigned effort while it is in progress.

Even within the Modern Management Syndrome managers still apply this good-management practice. The value of a strong assignment process is recognized without challenge. The Syndrome challenge appears where there is inconsistency in applications.

For example, the increasing popularity of program management indicates the high level of intrusion of a different understanding of good practices. Maintaining this popular form of management process is considered more important than application of good-management practice. The program manager is made responsible for a result, but is not given authority over the resources required to gain that result. He or she is expected to influence other managers, who do have the authority, so that they will expend their resources in furtherance of his or her program.

The Syndrome Challenge

If it is all so obvious, then why wasn't it handled decades ago?

The challenge of a syndrome is that we see the symptoms, but not the functional problem that causes the symptoms.

Stress became a recognized management symptom in the 1950's and has apparently been slowly increasing ever since. We have been trying intensively to do something about this obvious symptom since the early 1970's. This symptom of the Syndrome is painfully obvious!

Past attempts at handling this symptom have not addressed the cause of the problem, and it has continued growing. Diverting manager efforts into stress management training just adds a little more stress. Making stress management into a "duty" adds management work, without any productive result. It ignores both good-management practice and the definition of management.

After thirty years of intensive efforts, we still have little success in handling the problem of managerial stress. We have been slowly and steadily losing ground through cycle after cycle of programs that cannot do the job. That is why we have a continuing effort to find new stress management programs.

Stress is the symptom, not the problem. This work is set to handle the Syndrome, the cause behind a collection of symptoms. Manager stress is just one of the most visible symptoms, an obvious place to start the curative effort.

Table of Contents

<u>Introducing the Cure</u>	i
<u>Table of Contents</u>	viii
<u>Section 1: Personal Manager Challenges</u>	1
Challenge 1.1: Personal Stress in Management	2
Challenge 1.2: Handle Internal Conflicts	6
Challenge 1.3: Overworked	10
Challenge 1.4: They say I have to replace my Automation Again!	15
Challenge 1.5: No Feeling of Success or Failure	19
Challenge 1.6: Promoting Second-Raters Over You	22
Challenge 1.7: Inadequate Resources	26
Challenge 1.8: The Unsatisfied Boss	29
Challenge 1.9: Unsupportive Boss	33
<u>Section 2: In-Charge Challenges</u>	38
Challenge 2.1: Need for Assignment Basics	38
Challenge 2.2: Weak Product Understanding	43
Challenge 2.3: Lack of Priority	48
Challenge 2.4: Inappropriate Feedback,	52
Challenge 2.5: Too Many Assignments, Applied Art	55
Challenge 2.6: Too Many Assignments, Delegation Limits	58
Challenge 2.7: Quarterback Management, Policy & Assignment	63
Challenge 2.8: Cinderella Situations	68
Challenge 2.9: Micromanager Boss	71
Challenge 2.10: Subordinates Resource Unproductive Efforts	76
Challenge 2.11: Placed in Charge of a Process	81
Challenge 2.12: Ingrate Workers in Improved Conditions	85
Challenge 2.13: Unproductive Worker Attitude	88
Challenge 2.14: Impotent Subordinate Managers	91
Challenge 2.15: Poor Exception Management Support	94
Challenge 2.16: Subordinate Management Towers	98
<u>Section 3: Interpersonal Challenges</u>	105
Challenge 3.1: Interpersonal Stresses	105
Challenge 3.2: Disagreement on Success of Performance	111
Challenge 3.3: Sticky Bad Employees	116

Challenge 3.4: Good Employee Flight	120
Challenge 3.5: The Group that Won't Team	125
Challenge 3.6: Bad-Attitude Employees	129
<u>Section 4: Structural Ailments</u>	134
Challenge 4.1: No-Value Group Products	135
Challenge 4.2: No Product Groups	141
Challenge 4.3: Weak Support by Strong Support Groups	146
Challenge 4.4: Shared Group Responsibilities	150
Challenge 4.5: Bad-Attitude Groups	154
Challenge 4.6: Internal-Support Authority Structures	158
Challenge 4.7: Overlapping Managerial Responsibilities	163
Challenge 4.8: Supervision Towers	167
Challenge 4.9: Overactive Unionism	172
Challenge 4.10: No-Exception Supervisors	177
<u>Section 5: Performance Ailments</u>	182
Challenge 5.1: Efficiency Programs	183
Challenge 5.2: Management by Audit	190
Challenge 5.3: Goal-Oriented Management	196
Challenge 5.4: Strategic Management	200
<u>Section 6: Summation and Lessons Learned</u>	206
The Personal lesson and Applied Common Sense	211
Homeopathic Medicine is Preferred to Corrective Surgery	214
Pariah Status as an Investment Cost	220
<u>Seeds for This Book</u>	A1

Section 1: Personal Manager Challenges

Engineering approach uses functional analysis and experience to find practical solutions to real problems. The first step into management engineering is a big one.

Managing to relieve stress is a management action.

Externally defined and applied programs, no matter how well intentioned, are unlikely to yield lasting relief. Programs that take the manager out of management to learn more effective personal behaviors are also counterproductive. Good-management practice has to reject both of these at the start.

The attitude and approach of the individual manager is the primary source of stress, and it will only be removed through modifying his or her attitude and approach. Such changes cannot be externally applied. Solution will be through managers managing themselves more effectively.

This work provides professional support for the manager who is determined to become more effective through a self-management effort.

Perspective is key to solution. The management engineer is not the one who has a problem to solve, and does not perform curative actions. The problem occurs because of existing management practices and understandings. The management engineer provides good-management understandings as alternatives to practices that arise due to the Modern Management Syndrome; but only self-directed application by the manager puts more effective attitudes and approaches into use.

The first effort is to relieve personal stress!

Before a manager can work to best effect, he or she has to relieve immediate stressors. The first step in this work is to challenge some of those modern management understandings and applications that have created stress.

Addressing the deeper problem of the larger Syndrome will take a more protracted effort, but there is a great deal that can be done by the individual manager to promote his or her own immediate relief.

Challenge 1.1: Personal Stress in Management

One of the best aspects of good engineering logic is that we can start at the desired result, and build back to the activities that yield it. The first effort will establish an alternative direction for self-management where the Syndrome's effect is less pronounced. By this the manager can free him or herself for implementing further improvements as they are identified for action.

Changes to attitude and approach have some physical analogues. An unused muscle deteriorates. On coming out of a leg cast, the first steps are usually shaky and uncertain. The leg may feel a little weak, and perhaps even unreliable.

The same is true for the new uses to which good management will be applied. They have long gone without use. There will be a feeling of strangeness, even though everything we know says that the improvement has to follow.

Our first step is not "the cure," but it provides a symptomatic relief powered by an intentional step toward more-effective management. The logic and approach applied in this first step will promote and become part of the larger cure.

The final cure will not be through a formula so much as a pattern. The pattern of a cloth is seen when many threads are combined until there is a picture. The cure for the Modern Management Syndrome will continue taking form as more challenges and more cures are examined.

Symptom: Severe Personal Stress

Our start is the general statement that stress is a symptom. It is an impact from the Modern Management Syndrome. Even though stress cannot be removed by any one immediate action, it can certainly be relieved through available good-management practices that are now being avoided.

Cure: Supervise Oneself as a Resource

Effective self-supervision is the first curative action. In the attitude of good-management practice, the manager is a business resource, every bit as valuable as any worker. The cure is through a manager treating him or herself every bit as well as any subordinate.

Effective examples can be found in the production environment, where the simplest and most direct management situations are easily studied. The production-line foreman is smart enough not to let workers work themselves to exhaustion. The workers would become stressed and unable to continue effectively.

The same must be applied when a manager supervises his or her own performance. Maintaining the value of resources is an important part of supervision.

One most-welcome side affect from this direction for action is the communication it provides to the manager's supervisor.

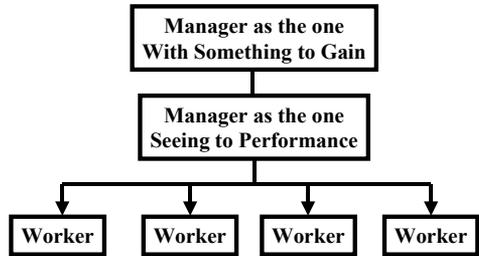


Figure 1 - 1

“My plate is full. If I try to do much more right now, I will become less effective in supporting my charges.”

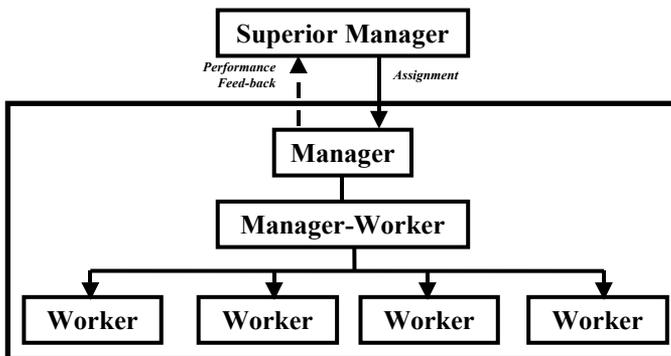


Figure 1 - 2

This is exactly the type of feedback that the next-superior manager needs to establish effective management over his or her subordinates. Feedback from monitoring the limits of personal capacity is an appropriate message addressing the subordinate manager's performance. The superior manager is responsible for gaining results through managing his or her subordinate managers.

The subordinate's self-management result is a critical witness to the ability of the subordinate manager to manage the time and effort of other subordinate managers. This sort of intelligent feedback communicates an ability to function effectively at higher management levels, a witness to readiness for promotion.

Cure: Prioritize – And Do what you Know Needs Doing

The cure is through establishing priorities for self-directed management efforts, and working to those priorities.

Please take special note: prioritizing is not a different cure than self-management. It is an enhancement by approaching self-management with a second logic, one that is also good-management practice. The pattern of a cure is not found in any single direction of action, but in examining many management challenges, and many cures.

Priorities help to define what a manager has to produce to be a success. If the manager does not know what has value as the product of management efforts, then he or she cannot manage the gaining of that product, and performance is questionable. This logical approach is especially valuable for self-management, as the manager is both the director and the performer.

Pathology: Inappropriate Stress

The first shocker is that there is no solution through an elimination of stress. Stress is not the problem. The Modern Management Syndrome is the problem. Personal stress is only a symptom indicating that there is some greater problem in management. We are addressing stress for symptomatic relief in such a way that we begin to deal with the larger challenge of the Syndrome.

$$\text{Stress} = \text{Requirements} > \text{Abilities}$$

The functional definition of manager stress starts with cause. It is a destructive result of a mismatch between accepted performance requirements and personal performance abilities. It makes no difference if the inability comes from lack of time, lack of capacity, or the general impossibility of the task. The stressful result is independent of the specifics of the cause.

This definition for stress is personal to the one who is stressed. It does not matter if the manager's boss shares the manager's understanding of requirements, only that the manager accepts personal responsibility beyond personal capability.

Stress has a personal definition.

The process of stress starts with an inappropriate concern. It begins with an accepted need to do something that the manager is unable to perform, or a desire to demonstrate characteristics that the manager does not have.

Each person creates and operates with their own unique concept of an "appropriate" amount of stress. Appropriate stress appears essential for personal comfort. If some manager does reduce stress below his or her personal-comfort level, they are likely to create new stressful situations until their personal comfort is reestablished.

The concept of "appropriate" is not an ancillary matter, but is the heart of the effort that promotes effective self-management. The comfort zone for the individual manager is part of his or her definition of "appropriate." Each manager must know themselves as a resource, and work to provide this appropriate stress level through their self-management activities.

Self-management includes gaining a healthy stress level.

It is also important to note that the acceptance of responsibilities is not a matter of fact, but of personal opinion. Importance attaches because the manager accepts responsibility, not because someone else is likely to hold them accountable. There is often a gap between the source of stress and the reality of external demands. It is often possible to get rid of much stress just by a careful analysis of priorities, separating out results that involve accountability from those that are mostly personal.

Diagnosis: Be Proud of Your Management

The solution is personal to the manager who takes action. The diagnosis will also be personal. A manager may recognize the existence of inappropriate stress by the feeling that he or she lacks pride in accomplishment. Such a lack is an indication of conflict between action and priority.

To the contrary, the personal pride of a manager in their overall management performance is an indication that the direction and effort are personally appropriate. Any lack of pride should be taken as a warning signal.

Challenge 1.2: Handle Internal Conflicts

The effective handling of employee conflicts is a challenge given to modern managers under the Syndrome. It is currently considered very important.

This one challenge should not be seen as singular, but as representative of a class of stress-enhancing attitudes and approaches that have been allowed to develop into major problem areas for modern managers.

The basic cause for this challenge is an abiding loss of focus on the purpose for having a manager. Managers are the business-owner's way of getting things done through employees. The challenge does not address management at all, but is within the realm of supervision. It is an abandonment of management to address supervisory techniques and processes. Resolving personal employee conflicts has little direct impact on the business's ability to produce its salable outputs, or on its overall cost of performance.

Symptom: Personal Bickering and Conflicts

The symptom commonly addressed is seen in a perceived need for managers to resolve internal disharmony. The theory supporting application relates to situations that make the group-effort unattractive for the prosecution of productive work. The stress-generating attitude and approach is the acceptance of personal manager responsibility for resolving subordinate-to-subordinate conflicts.

Few efforts are more stressful than attempts to solve the wrong problem.

The obvious question is whether this activity is necessary and convenient for the prosecution of business. Is resolving interpersonal disharmony necessary and convenient for gaining performance through the subordinates involved? Such a question is rarely asked under the Modern Management Syndrome. A manager simply accepts personal responsibility for taking action to resolve the worker's personal problems.

To recognize the distraction, consider that the resolution of personal worker problems is unlikely to have any impact on either the cost of running the business or the amount and quality of product that it sells to its customers. The care of workers is an internal challenge, not a productive one. Resolving these conflicts is unlikely to have any impact on the value of the business to its owners. The only two factors that determine operating efficiency are overall cost and value of product.

Cure: Counseling is not a Management Purpose

The curative rule is in the attitude that the manager does not have to accept the personal stresses of subordinates as his or her own personal stress. The purpose behind hiring a manager is getting productive results, not assuring that workers are happy with their employment.

Management is gaining performance through the efforts of others. Whether or not they find each other personally appealing is not a performance issue. Resolving their personal problems with one another is not a management concern, though it might be a matter of supervision, of maintaining the resources ready to perform productive work. If subordinates are ready and willing to perform, there is no performance-based reason to get involved.

As noted, supervision has a lower priority than management. Supervisory challenges are to be addressed only after productive performance is assured. This supervisory challenge should only be granted high priority when the internal conflicts threaten to interfere with performance.

Cure: Run the Business for the Owners

One stressor is in the attitude that the business owes something personal to its employees, and that the manager is supposed to pay that debt for the business. The curative rule is a return to the basics of business. The business exists because the owners invest in it. The business is run for the benefit of the owners, not the benefit of the hired help.

There is no cure for a management problem through applying high-quality supervision.

If a manager finds him or herself teaching and correcting worker behaviors because they don't deliver the product effectively, there is a very good chance that the real product is inadequately defined. The curative action is to fix the definition of product so that it addresses the real value that must be delivered. Then the value-adding delivery becomes part of the definition of the product.

The good-management practice addresses delivering product to customers, not providing benefits to employees. It leads to investing in actions that promote productive performances.

With the approach of the Modern Management Syndrome, the action is implemented without having any established threat to performance. It is like giving every employee a dose of antibiotic because you fear a subordinate may someday catch a cold.

Cure: Focus on Your Own Success

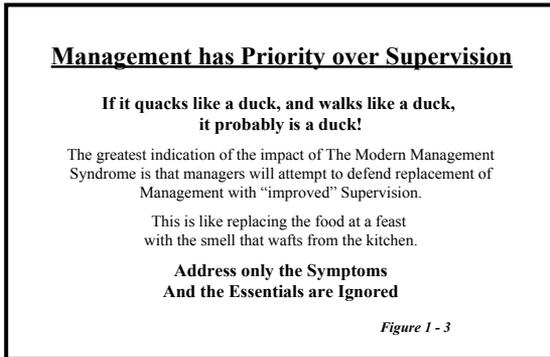
Another interesting side issue is that the manager is also an employee. The business does not owe any duty to make the manager's position pleasant. It is up to the manager to know the probable sources of his or her own potential stress, and to manage them.

It is within the manager's position to maintain him or herself as a resource. The manager is to remain ready for the performance of management efforts. Inappropriate stress is a well-recognized threat to performance of management. Part of the job of management is taking actions to avoid stressors. Consistent focus on performance is a useful management tool.

Pathology: Loss of Focus on Management

This challenge addresses one of a number of similar stressors that exist in modern management. Managers are usually rewarded for minimizing complaints, and for encouraging workers in self-development. They are directed to provide training in sensitivity to the needs and concerns of others, for helping workers feel good about themselves, and generally for helping workers see each other as valuable and effective people.

The general direction of the problem is loss of focus on performance, by redirecting interest to maintenance of valuable resources.



All these activities are distractions from management, distractions from the central purpose of gaining performance through the efforts of others. They are long-term efforts in supervision. They operate under the theory that improving the general quality of workers also improves the operation of the business.

Putting this sort of challenge on the working manager draws him or her away from focus on performance, and hides the cost of supervision. It avoids the good-management practice of approaching training and personal improvement as potential investments.

One challenge seen in this direction of activity is that a manager's success or failure in handling personal conflicts cannot be managed. As with most supervision, there is no specific and measurable value-to-the-business that might be gained through a manager's counseling efforts.

Worse still, there is nothing additional to be gained by those who are counseled. There is no established link between how workers relate to one another and the performance of the business. The greatest efforts of managers in gaining interpersonal peace among

workers is unlikely to have any effect on either the cost of operating the business or the amount or quality of product distributed to customers.

As a matter of general priority, there are things that a manager can do to have substantial impact on performance. Those actions should be given priority over concerns that yield very little.

Diagnosis: Bickering Causes Loss of Performance

The diagnosis is on the basis of an attitude that insists that internal dissension has to be rectified to support performance.

The idea that bickering and internal conflict causes a loss of performance is a theory, not a fact. If the problem is a loss of performance, it will be measurable as a loss of performance. If there is no loss of performance, there is no need to expend resources (including the manager's personal time and effort) to solve the problem.

If there is a real performance problem, it always has high priority, and that problem should be addressed intelligently by identifying and removing the cause. This is the correct direction, whether or not the cause includes resolving internal dissension between workers.

Challenge 1.3: Overworked

Return attention to the production line, the place where work issues are physical, and most directly visible. There is no such thing as an overworked worker in a well-managed production area. The work manager's job includes making sure that no worker is ever overworked. The workers are given an appropriate and well-balanced workload to assure their continuing value as performance resources.

What is true for the worker performing production is also true for the manager performing the necessary work of management. Group management includes support for both productive worker efforts and self-assigned management work.

As discussed in Challenge 1.1, the manager needs to perform management over work that he or she personally assigns, including self-assigned work. He or she must assure the effectiveness of all work efforts.

As in the previous challenges, we are to address any lack or ineffectiveness in management with a restoration of good-management practices and performances.

Symptom: Too Much Work to Do

The symptom is the self-assignment of more work than can be accomplished. This meets our definition of stress. It is a feeling of being responsible beyond ability to perform. This stress is caused by an attitude initiated and maintained by the manager who is stressed. Self-assigned requirements are one basic cause of personal stress within the environment of the modern manager.

This sort of problem may be defined in terms of the abandonment of, or distraction from, good management. Refocus on good management is a direction for solution that goes to the basic cause; it moves the situation in the direction of a cure for the Modern Management Syndrome.

Also, the reality of the demand for performance is not the issue when it comes to stress. The driver is the personal opinion of the manager that there are requirements. The cause of the stress is a self-inflicted opinion that something has to be accomplished where the requirement exceeds reasonable ability to perform.

Cure: Delegation Defined as a Function

The cure for overwork is found in two directions; removing requirements placed by others, and removing requirements generated as part of self-management.

One curative action is delegation of lower priority performances to subordinates.

This first cure more readily applies to mid-level managers. The cure is through “functional delegation.” I qualify this term to distinguish it from assignment, which will be more exactly defined for addressing later challenges. The concept of functional delegation is a passing of responsibility for handling a challenge to a subordinate.

A clear understanding of the differences between an assignment and a delegation supports good management. An assignment is within the definition of management, it is a means for gaining something through the efforts of a subordinate. With assignment, the subordinate becomes the action arm of the assigning manager for the purpose of gaining the productive result.

Assignments are managed by product. Delegations are managed by exception.

A delegation has no specific product. It is the passing of responsibility for a challenge or problem to a subordinate. There is no need for productive feedback; no need for the superior manager to manage what has been delegated.

Delegations are often managed in the negative. Some problem is given to a subordinate with the requirement that they take care of it. The delegation is successfully performed so long as the challenge or problem does not again come to the attention of the superior for action.

The managerial difference is in the amount of supporting management work required of the one initiating the action. The manager over an assignment has a part to play that assures gaining the performance. The manager over a delegation puts the matter out of mind, and has no further direct management actions.

The working manager may apply the cure through delegation. This reduces his or her workload by shifting management responsibilities to someone else. The manager who receives a functional delegation is required to independently do the management that assures the result.

Cure: Self-Assign Exception Management

Another curative action is shifting direct management responsibility to a subordinate manager.

The specific action yielding this result is an assignment of direct management as a performance requirement. Here the individual subordinate manager is given responsibility for gaining a productive result through his or her subordinate management efforts.

This is different than delegation because the assignment still involves a management action by the assignor. There will be a productive result required, and the performance of the subordinate manager will include generating that result.

Assignment of management responsibility includes a definition for exception management. The subordinate manager has a product responsibility, and the assignor should only become involved to receive the assigned management product, or to handle exceptions. Exceptions for the assignor are situations or threats to performance

that are beyond the ability of the subordinate manager who received the assignment.

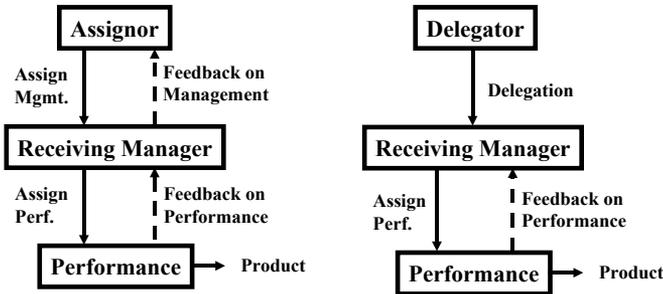


Figure 1 - 4

As with delegation, there is a reduced assignor workload through assigning direct management performance to a subordinate.

Pathology: Unmanaged Responsibilities

A foreman accepts responsibility for gaining the productive result of worker efforts. The area foreman feels responsible for gaining the productive results of his or her area, whether or not some subordinate foreman shares in it. The manufacturing area chief feels responsible for gaining the productive result of the whole local effort. He feels responsible even though others largely take responsibility for their subordinate pieces of the same effort.

**Exercise of authority has no product.
Its performance cannot be managed.**

The basic cause of stress in this challenge area is belief in the effectiveness of an authority-based management structure. With this structure, responsibility attaches to authority. That sense of personal responsibility for an assigned result is not lessened through giving work to subordinates. Both senior and junior managers accept responsibility for gaining the same result.

Good management includes the rule that we are never to make two people responsible for the same work result. That is a known bad-management practice that has been institutionalized by our way of dividing up authority.

**Where two workers are responsible for one product,
neither can be held to account for performance.**

The practical rule is that you remove yourself from responsibility when you pass it to someone else. If you cannot be relieved from responsibility, you have no benefit from making assignments to subordinates.

Pathology: Exception Rule Part II

The Exception Management Rule is often stated: “Assigned work never passes up the administrative chain unless it cannot be performed by the subordinate.” The second side of this rule is: “Administrative work never passes down the administrative chain unless it cannot be performed by the superior.”

Exception Rule: Part I

**Managers only perform productive work
when it is exceptional for workers**

The logic of part I applies a good-management concept. Each worker is responsible for his or her own performance, and the supervisor accepts responsibility as is necessary to assure performances beyond the capability of the workers.

Exception Rule: Part II

**Subordinates only perform management
when it is exceptional for managers**

One fascinating application from this rule is that management work can only be assigned once. If non-exceptional management is assigned to a subordinate manager, it cannot be effectively reassigned. If productive efforts are assigned, they cannot be effectively reassigned.

The larger challenges of complex reassignments will be handled in later sections addressing advanced assignment practices that implement good management. It is enough for this early presentation to focus on eliminating those reassignments that most directly promote stress.

Diagnosis: Requirements Beyond Ability

Overwork is not a matter of measurement, but one where a manager compares his or her own performance requirements with a personal ability to perform the work. Where the accepted requirements exceed performance ability, we have the challenge noted. It is more an issue of a manager's personal opinion of what is appropriate than a metric to be measured.

This challenge area can be seen as one of the stressors of the type noted in Challenge 1.1. Delegations and assignments of management responsibilities are alternative means for reducing common manager stress. These techniques are then added to our curative actions noted for handling the more general challenge.

Challenge 1.4: They say I have to replace my Automation Again!

The challenge is one of being in charge of a function. The known and well-recognized good-management practice puts the responsible manager in charge of the resources that are used for performance of assigned tasks. Our Modern Management Syndrome insists that it is good management to put the technical specialist in authority over technical resources because of his or her specialized knowledge.

As with the previous challenges, we are not addressing any specific area as being unique, but are addressing a general flow of thought in the operation of modern management systems. What is true concerning office automation is also true concerning supply management, legal support, and many other areas. These functions are not fully given over into the hands of the manager responsible for products, but are directed by the area experts.

Symptom: Poor-Me Management

An information manager determines to replace existing software throughout the organization with an enhanced version. The implementation will require four hours of downtime and retraining for each affected employee.

The abandonment of good management is the soul of this symptom. If this action goes forward, the manager who is responsible for performance is not given full authority over the resources of the business that are to be applied to gain his or her assigned results.

This manager is rather required to take resources away from assigned work to support the decision of the information manager.

The symptom arises where the quality of the tool is considered more important to the performance of the business than the proper operation of management in accord with its definition and essentials. The cure is the reestablishment of good-management process.

Cure: Focus on Management Essentials

The production chief can respond, “I don’t have any problem with the existing software, and the change will cost 200 units of production. Let’s spend our resources on fixing potholes in the loading area, or somewhere else where we get a benefit from it.”

The solution can be seen from the standpoint of the superior manager who has authority over “poor-me” managers. Action by affected managers is appropriate based on their responsibility for product. Directing them to take charge of their resources for the assigned productive purpose is the appropriate good-management practice.

The first management essential is “something to gain through the efforts of subordinates.” An improved data handling is not a valuable product unless someone gains by the change. The curative action is through raising the issue of product. The information manager is not the one who has primary performance responsibilities, and should be supporting those who do have it. Value is not found in the support he or she wants to provide, but the support that production areas need to generate salable product.

The second essential is authority over resources, directing their use to gain the desired value. Internal support area experts are not part of this action. If they have already been given authority over another manager’s resources, it is up to the manager to take his or her authority back. He or she is the one who has something to accomplish, and should strip authority away from those who have no responsibility for performance.

Cure: Define your Need, Accept no Challenges

The Production Chief can respond by taking it to the senior manager. “My people are using the existing equipment without difficulty. Let’s not take the tools out of the hands of workmen without first having some indication that it is going to make them more productive.”

The second direction for solution is recognition of business purpose. Area experts are brought into a business to support the resources used for performance. The performance is always of higher priority, and should never answer to the support effort. Subordinating performance to support almost assures inefficiencies.

The accepted process for instituting good management begins with a requirement. There must be a need for any “improved” support that is offered. Without that need, the area expert has no performance to meet through the recommended change.

Wherever technical support groups define what they will produce, the superior manager is not the one deciding what to gain through the support efforts. This removes performance of support from management. The one who has performance responsibility should define the support he or she needs to assure success in the productive effort. If the technical or area expert has a “better idea,” they need to go to their internal customers to establish its value.

Cure: Effective Proponent for a Responsibility

The work manager can take charge of his resources, and deny any effort to redirect his workers into unnecessary training. He can complain to his supervisor that he is being taken out of authority, and suggest that the support group be made directly responsible for any costs incurred by their interference in productive efforts.

Every manager understands the importance of putting authority where they have already set responsibility. The superior manager, by placing responsibility for a product upon a junior manager, fixes the definition of value in that product. The subordinate can always return to the superior to exercise that authority. The superior manager will almost always support the performance of the work he or she assigned. This manager will carry the issue to higher management if necessary to minimize unproductive interferences.

Pathology: Mission Drives the Organization

The pathology is in the Syndrome’s insistence that the quality of resources is more important to the operation of the business than performance. This is another of the ways that supervision can be given higher priority than management.

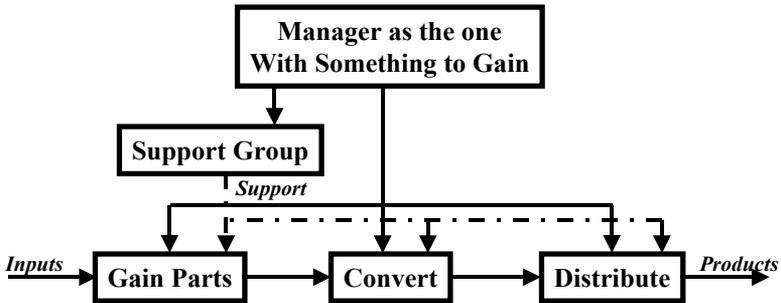


Figure 1 - 5

Another aspect of the effort is a belief that the business is most efficient when all of its parts are most productive. The truth is that producing additional internal support rarely yields any increase in whole business performance. Increasing the quality of internal support is similarly ineffective.

The support group does not increase the value of its product by its own effort. The value of an input to someone else's process is determined by the needs served in the supported process, and those needs do not change with improvement efforts in the support group.

It is a universal truth that the purpose for a business is found in production of its outputs. Under the Modern Management Syndrome, internal products are often emphasized. Then the good-management focus on profit-generating efforts can be redirected to address efficiency in providing internal supports, or to increasing the quality of the internal support provided.

Curative action is available through raising the conflict at the level of performance. Senior managers, those who accept personal responsibility for the profitability of the business, are very sensitive to the investment logic inherent in expending on improvements that don't end up earning more income.

Diagnosis: Manager Feels Out-of-Control

The observable symptom is where the manager who is responsible for a performance feels that he or she is not in charge of performance resources necessary to do the job. Without having authority over the resources used in performance, the manager is unable to assure a successful performance, and we have an unnecessary source of management stress.

Challenge 1.5: No Feeling of Success or Failure

The supervisor of a work group has been directed to make the boss's son, who is starting out as a worker, feel welcome. The group supervisor prepares the workplace, and lets his people know of the situation.

Three of the senior workers in the group resent the intrusion of the "new authority" and make their displeasure known by obvious and deliberate rudeness.

This is observed by several of the more senior managers, and the supervisor is called to his boss's office for a conference.

The source of stress is obvious; the supervisor does not know whether or not he has performed what was asked of him.

Symptom: Lack of Definition from Above

The symptom is the lack of any clear difference between the success and failure of the supervisor's performance. The result is personal stress, probably for all concerned. The workers are stressed by not knowing what will happen to them because of their actions. The supervisor is stressed by not knowing if he or she did enough to control the situation. The assigning manager and senior managers are stressed by the potential displeasure of the boss.

The symptom may be caused by hostile worker actions, but it cannot be resolved as a true performance matter when there is no accepted product. The stress-generating challenge arises from putting supervision above management, and must be addressed in management if there is to be a cure.

Cure: What a Superior Manager Needs to Manage

***"Will it satisfy the Boss if I
present his son like any other new worker?"***

The first direction for cure returns to the basic definition of management. If there is no specific statement of the productive result to be accomplished, there is no way to manage the gaining of that result. The original failure is in establishment of a desired productive result.

The ones who initiated the action should have defined the product. The boss, whose son was the concern, should also have initiated it. The necessary point of management was the assignment of the family member to the supervisor. When there was no definition of success in the assignment, the result was a stressful situation.

Any curative action must provide the missing product definition. The ones who make the assignment can apply the curative action, and should define a productive result that has a difference between success and failure. This could have relieved much of the stress, even as it raised concerns on what might be required to accomplish the result that was defined.

The one receiving the assignment could also have applied this cure when the attempted assignment was given. If no good product was provided, the one receiving the assignment could erect a straw man and feed this back to the person making the assignment. "Will it satisfy the Boss if I present his son like any other new worker?" Verbalizing a potential product puts the management burden upon the superior manager to either accept or refine the definition.

Cure: Support an Investment in Your Effort

"I have a couple of troublemakers who will make the kid's life hell for a few days. Do we want to give them assignments in some other place while the Boss's son is accepted by the rest of the group?"

This presents another curative action in similar direction, but to a different effect. The manager who receives a vague assignment may approach it as a potential for investment. The assignee's subordinate action is then directed to supporting an intelligent investment decision by the one who makes the assignment. This is not based on defining success, so much as understanding potential costs and benefits.

By this approach, the assignee calls upon the superior manager to take an active part in the determination of values. The assignor and assignee are then joined in the action that can best assure an effective outcome, even as they work together to define what has value as a product.

Not only does this share the responsibility, it also provides a framework for presenting their jointly determined activities as "intelligent." Even if the boss should find the results of their efforts unacceptable, their shared responsibility is less stressful.