MINTZBERG ON MANAGEMENT

INSIDE OUR STRANGE WORLD OF ORGANIZATIONS

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When we think of *organization,* we think of *management.* Of course, there is a great deal more to organizations than managers and the management systems they create. But what distinguishes the formal organization from a random collection of people—a mob, an informal group—is the presence of some system of authority and administration, personified by one manager or several in a hierarchy to knit the whole effort together.

That being the case, and given the love affair the American people in particular have had with the manager for more than a century, from Horatio Alger to Lee Iacocca, it is surprising how little study there has been of what managers actually do. Like thousands of other students at the time, I took an MBA, a degree ostensibly designed to train managers, without questioning the fact that no one ever discussed in a serious way what managers really did. Imagine a program in medicine without ever a comment on the work of the doctor.

There has certainly been no shortage of material on what managers *should* do (for example, follow a whole set of simple prescriptions called "time management" or use computers in the ways recommended by detached technical specialists). Unfortunately, in the absence of any real understanding of managerial work, much of this advice has proved false and wasteful. How can anyone possibly prescribe change in a phenomenon so complex as managerial work without first having a deep comprehension of it?

In the mid-1960s, James Webb, who ran NASA, wanted to be studied. NASA felt the need to justify its existence by spinning off practical applications of its innovations, and Webb counted its management processes among those innovations. Webb raised the idea with a professor of mine at the MIT Sloan School of Management, and since I was the only doctoral student then studying *management* there (as opposed to computer systems or mathematical models or motivating people, etc.), he approached me to study Webb as my doctoral thesis. I declined what seemed to be a crazy idea. This was MIT, after all, the bastion of science. Sitting in a manager's office and writing down what he did all day just didn't seem quite right. (Another professor had told me earlier that what an MIT doctoral thesis had to be above all was "elegant." He was not referring to the results.) In any event, I was going to do a thesis on how to develop a comprehensive strategic planning process for organizations. Luckily, and not for the last time in my life, forces outside of me saved me from myself.

The planning thesis didn't work out, for want of an organization willing to subject itself to such an exercise (or for want of my trying very hard to find one). Then I attended a conference at MIT to which a number of impressive people came to discuss the impact that the computer would have on the manager. They went nowhere; for two days they talked in circles, hardly getting beyond the contention that the managers' use of the computer should have something to do with the fact that their work was "unprogrammed" (whatever that was supposed to mean). It struck me that these people lacked a framework to enable them to understand managerial work. They certainly didn't lack an innate knowledge of the process—they all worked with managers, and a number were managers themselves. What they lacked was a *conceptual* basis to consider the issue.

I learned two things at that conference. The first was that knowing explicitly was different from knowing implicitly, and both had great relevance for running organizations. The second was that there was an urgent need for someone to look carefully at what managers really did, that even at a place like MIT, what mattered in a thesis was not the elegance of the methodology but the relevance of the topic.

And so I did my first research on "the nature of managerial work" (the title of the book that resulted from the thesis). But not with James Webb, who was no longer available. Using a stopwatch (much as Frederick Taylor had done with factory workers years earlier), I observed in the course of one intensive week the activities of five chief executives: of a major consulting firm, a well-known teaching hospital, a school system, a high-technology firm, and a manufacturer of consumer goods. One week was not a long time, but I was more interested in the pace and nature of the work than in the unfolding of issues over the long term. The dissertation was completed in 1968, the book in 1973; two years later, the *Harvard Business Review* published the article that is reprinted here (with minor changes).

In orientation and tone, as well as in some of its central content, this article really set the pattern for my subsequent work. An article that followed in the *New York Times* (on October 29, 1976)[1] labeled this description of managerial work "calculated chaos" and "controlled disorder." It also used a phrase that I have come to prefer for characterizing much of my writing: "celebrating intuition."

If you ask managers what they do, they will most likely tell you that they plan, organize, coordinate, and control. Then watch what they do. Don't be surprised if you can't relate what you see to those four words.

When they are called and told that one of their factories has just burned down, and they advise the caller to see whether temporary arrangements can be made to supply customers through a foreign subsidiary, is that planning, organizing, coordinating, or controlling? How about when they present a gold watch to a retiring employee? Or when they attend a conference to meet people in the trade? Or on returning from that conference, when they tell one of their employees about an interesting product idea they picked up there?

The fact is that those four words, which have dominated management vocabulary since the French industrialist Henri Fayol first introduced them in 1916, tell us little about what managers actually do. At best, they indicate some vague objectives managers have when they work.

My intention here is simple: to break the reader away from Fayol's words and introduce him or her to a more supportable, and what I believe to be a more useful, description of managerial work. This description is based on my own study of the work of five chief executives, supported by a few others on how various managers spent their time.

In some studies, managers were observed intensively ("shadowed" is the term some of them used); in a number of others, they kept detailed diaries of their activities; in a few studies, their records were analyzed. Various kinds of managers were studied—foremen, factory supervisors, staff managers, field sales managers, hospital administrators, presidents of companies and nations, and even street gang leaders. These "managers" worked in the United States, Canada, Sweden, and Great Britain.

A synthesis of these findings paints an interesting picture, one as different from Fayol's classical view as a cubist abstract is from a Renaissance painting. In a sense, this picture will be obvious to anyone who has ever spent a day in a manager's office, either in front of the desk or behind it. Yet at the same time, this picture may turn out to be revolutionary, in that it throws into doubt so much of the folklore that we have accepted about the manager's work.

I first discuss some of this folklore and contrast it with some of the findings of systematic research—the hard facts about how managers spend their time. Then I synthesize those research findings in a description of ten roles that seem to describe the essential content of all managers' jobs. In a concluding section, I discuss a number of implications of this synthesis for those trying to achieve more effective management.

SOME FOLKLORE AND FACTS ABOUT MANAGERIAL WORK

There are four myths about the manager's job that do not bear up under careful scrutiny of the facts.

1. Folklore: The manager is a reflective, systematic planner. The evidence on the issue is overwhelming, but not a shred of it supports this statement.

Fact: Study after study has shown that managers work at an unrelenting pace, that their activities are characterized by brevity, variety, and discontinuity, and that they are strongly oriented to action and dislike reflective activities. Consider this evidence:

- Half the activities engaged in by the five chief executives of my study lasted less than nine minutes, and only 10 percent exceeded one hour.[2] A study of fifty-six U.S. foremen found that they averaged 583 activities per eight-hour shift, one every forty-eight seconds.[3] The work pace for both chief executives and foremen was unrelenting. The chief executives met a steady stream of callers and mail from the moment they arrived in the morning until they left in the evening. Coffee breaks and lunches were inevitably work-related, and ever present subordinates seemed to usurp any free moment.
- A diary study of 160 British middle and top managers found that they worked for a half-hour or more without interruption only about once every two days.[4]
- Of the verbal contacts of the chief executives in my study, 93 percent were arranged on an *ad hoc* basis. Only 1 percent of the executives' time was spent in open-ended observational tours. Only 1 out of 368 verbal contacts was unrelated to a specific issue and could be called general planning.
- No study has found important patterns in the way managers schedule their time. They seem to jump from issue to issue, continually responding to the needs of the moment.

Is this the planner of the classical literature? Hardly. How, then, can we explain this behavior? The manager is simply responding to the pressures of his or her job. I found that my chief executives terminated many of their own activities, often leaving meetings before the end, and interrupted their desk work to call in subordinates. One president not only placed his desk so that he could look down a long hallway but also left his door open when he was alone—an invitation for subordinates to come in and interrupt him.

Clearly, these managers wanted to encourage the flow of current information. But more significantly, they seemed to be conditioned by their own work loads. They appreciated the opportunity cost of their own time, and they were continually aware of their ever present obligations—mail to be answered, callers to attend to, and so on. It seems that no matter what they are doing, managers are plagued by the possibilities of what they might do and what they must do.

When the manager must plan, he or she seems to do so implicitly in the context of daily actions, not in some abstract process reserved for two weeks at the organization's mountain retreat. The plans of the chief executives I studied seemed to exist only in their heads—as flexible, but often specific, intentions. The traditional literature notwithstanding, the job of managing does not breed reflective planners; the manager is a real-time responder to stimuli, an individual who is conditioned by his or her job to prefer live to delayed action.

2. *Folklore: The effective manager has no regular duties to perform.* Managers are constantly being told to spend more time planning and delegating, and less time seeing customers and engaging in negotiations. Those are not, after all, the true tasks of the manager. To use the popular analogy, the good manager, like the good conductor, carefully orchestrates everything in advance, then sits back to enjoy the fruits of his or her labor, responding occasionally to an unforeseeable exception.

But here again the pleasant abstraction just does not seem to hold up.

Fact: In addition to handling exceptions, managerial work involves performing a number of regular duties, including ritual and ceremony, negotiations, and processing of soft information that links the organization with its environment. Consider some evidence from the research studies:

- A study of the work of the presidents of small companies found that they engaged in routine activities because their companies could not afford staff specialists and were so thin on operating personnel that a single absence often required the president to substitute.[5]

- One study of field sales managers and another of chief executives suggest that it is a natural part of both jobs to see important customers, assuming the managers wish to keep those customers.[6]
- Someone, only half in jest, once described the manager as that person who sees the visitors so that everyone else can get on with his or her work. In my study, I found that certain ceremonial duties—meeting visiting dignitaries, giving out gold watches, presiding at special dinners—were an intrinsic part of the chief executive's job.
- Studies of managers' information flow suggest that managers play a key role in securing "soft" external information (much of it available only to them because of their status) and in passing it along to their subordinates.

3. Folklore: The senior manager needs aggregated information, which a formal management information system best provides. In keeping with the classical view of the manager as that individual perched on the apex of a regulated, hierarchical system, the literature's manager is to receive all important information from a giant, comprehensive MIS. But a look at how managers actually process information reveals a very different picture. Managers have five media at their command—documents, telephone calls, scheduled and unscheduled meetings, and observational tours.

Fact: Managers strongly favor the oral media—namely, telephone calls and meetings. The evidence comes from every single study of managerial work. Consider the following:

- In two British studies, managers spent an average of 66 and 80 percent of their time in oral communication.[7] In my study of five American chief executives, the figure was 78 percent.
- These five chief executives treated mail processing as a burden to be dispensed with. One came in Saturday morning to process 142 pieces of mail in just over three hours, to "get rid of all the stuff." This same manager looked at the first piece of "hard" mail he had received all week, a standard cost report, and put it aside with the comment, "I never look at this."
- These same five chief executives responded immediately to just two of the forty routine reports they received during the five weeks of my study and to four items in the 104 periodicals. They skimmed most of these periodicals in seconds, almost ritualistically. In all,

these chief executives of good-size organizations initiated on their own—that is, not in response to something else—a grand total of twenty-five pieces of mail during the twenty-five days I observed them.

An analysis of the mail the executives received reveals an interesting picture: Only 13 percent was of specific and immediate use. So now we have another piece in the puzzle. Not much of the mail provides live, current information—the action of a competitor, the mood of a government legislator, the rating of last night's television show. Yet this is the information that drove the managers, interrupting their meetings and rescheduling their workdays.

Consider another interesting finding. Managers seem to cherish "soft" information, especially gossip, hearsay, and speculation. Why? The reason is its timeliness; today's gossip may be tomorrow's fact. The manager who is not accessible for the telephone call informing him that his biggest customer was seen golfing with his main competitor may read about a dramatic drop in sales in the next quarterly report. But then it's too late.

Consider the words of Richard Neustadt who studied the information-collecting habits of three U.S. Presidents:

> It is not information of a general sort that helps a President see personal stakes; not summaries, not surveys, not the *bland amalgams*. Rather . . . it is the odds and ends of *tangible detail* that pieced together in his mind illuminate the underside of issues put before him. To help himself, he must reach out as widely as he can for every scrap of fact, opinion, gossip, bearing on his interests and relationships as President. He must become his own director of his own central intelligence.[8]

The manager's emphasis on the oral media raises two important points:

First, oral information is stored in the brains of people. Only when people write this information down can it be stored in the files of the organization—whether in metal cabinets or on magnetic tape—and managers apparently do not write down much of what they hear. Thus the strategic data bank of the organization is not in the memory of its computers so much as in the minds of its managers.

Second, the managers' extensive use of oral media helps to explain why they are reluctant to delegate tasks. When we note that most of the managers' important information comes in oral form and is stored in their heads, we can well appreciate their reluctance. It is not as if they can hand a dossier over to someone; they must take the time to "dump memory"—to tell that someone all they know about the subject. But this could take so long that the managers may find it easier to do the task themselves. Thus the manager is damned by his or her own information system to a "dilemma of delegation"—to do too much him or herself or to delegate to subordinates with inadequate briefing.

4. *Folklore: Management is, or at least is quickly becoming, a science and a profession.* By almost any definitions of *science* and *profession,* this statement is false. Brief observation of any manager will quickly lay to rest the notion that managers practice a science. A science involves the enaction of systematic, analytically determined procedures or programs. If we do not even know what procedures managers use, how can we prescribe them by scientific analysis? And how can we call management a profession if we cannot specify what managers are to learn?

Fact: The managers' programs—to schedule time, process information, make decisions, and so on—remain locked deep inside their brains. Thus, to describe those programs, we rely on words like *judgment* and *intuition,* seldom stopping to realize that they are merely labels for our ignorance.

I was struck during my study by the fact that the executives I observed—all very competent by any standard—were fundamentally indistinguishable from their counterparts of a hundred years ago. The information they needed differed, but they sought it in the same way—by word of mouth. Their decisions concerned modern technology, but the procedures they used to make them were the same as the procedures of the nineteenth-century manager. Even the computer, so important for the specialized work of the organization, had apparently had no influence on the work procedures of general managers. In fact, the manager is in a kind of loop, with increasingly heavy work pressures but no aid forthcoming from management science.

Considering the facts about managerial work, we can see that the manager's job is enormously complicated and difficult. The manager is overburdened with obligations; yet he or she cannot easily delegate his or her tasks. As a result, he or she is driven to overwork and is forced to do many tasks superficially. Brevity, fragmentation, and oral communication characterize the work. Yet these are the very characteristics of managerial work that have impeded scientific attempts to improve it. As a result, management scientists have concentrated their efforts on the specialized functions of the organization, where they could more easily analyze the procedures and quantify the relevant information. Thus the first step in providing the manager with some help is to find out what his or her job really is.

BACK TO A BASIC DESCRIPTION OF MANAGERIAL WORK

Let us try to put some of the pieces of this puzzle together. The manager can be defined as that person in charge of an organization or one of its subunits. Besides chief executive officers, this definition would include vice presidents, bishops, foremen, hockey coaches, and prime ministers. Can all of these people have anything in common? Indeed they can. For an important starting point, all are vested with formal authority over an organizational unit. From formal authority comes status, which leads to various interpersonal relations, and from these comes access to information. Information, in turn, enables the manager to make decisions and strategies for his or her unit.

The manager's job can be described in terms of various "roles," or organized sets of behaviors identified with a position. My description, shown in Figure 1–1, comprises ten roles.

INTERPERSONAL ROLES

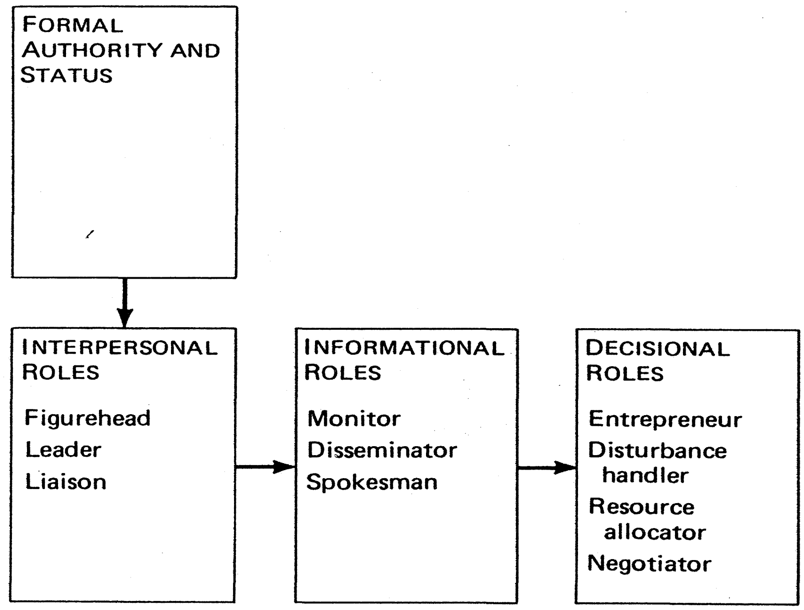
Three of the manager's roles arise directly from formal authority and involve basic interpersonal relationships.

1. First is the *figurehead* role. By virtue of his or her position as head of an organizational unit, every manager must perform some duties of a ceremonial nature. The president greets the touring dignitaries, the foreman attends the wedding of a lathe operator, and the sales manager takes an important customer to lunch.

The chief executives of my study spent 12 percent of their contact time on ceremonial duties; 17 percent of their incoming mail dealt with acknowledgments and requests related to their status. For example, a letter to a company president requested free merchandise for a disabled schoolchild; diplomas were put on the desk of the school superintendent for his signature.

Duties that involve interpersonal roles may sometimes be routine, involving little serious communication and no important decision-making.

FIGURE 1–1
The Manager's Roles



Nevertheless, they are important to the smooth functioning of an organization and cannot be ignored by the manager.

2. Because he or she is in charge of an organizational unit, the manager is responsible for the work of the people of that unit. His or her actions in this regard constitute the *leader* role. Some of those actions involve leadership directly—for example, in most organizations the manager is normally responsible for hiring and training his or her own staff. In addition, there is the indirect exercise of the leader role. Every manager must motivate and encourage his or her employees, somehow reconciling their individual needs with the goals of the organization. In virtually every contact the manager has with those employees, subordinates seeking leadership clues probe his or her actions: "Does he approve?" "How would she like the report to turn out?" "Is he more interested in market share than high profits?"

The influence of the manager is most clearly seen in the leader role. Formal authority vests the manager with great potential power; leadership determines in large part how much of it he or she will in fact use.

3. The literature of management has always recognized the leader role, particularly those aspects of it related to motivation. In comparison,

until recently it has hardly mentioned the *liaison* role, in which the manager makes contacts outside his or her vertical chain of command. This is remarkable in light of the finding of virtually every study of managerial work that managers spend as much time with peers and other people outside their units as they do with their own subordinates, and, surprisingly, very little time with their own superiors (generally on the order of 45, 45, and 10 percent respectively).

The contacts the five CEOs of my study made were with an incredibly wide range of people: subordinates; clients, business associates, and suppliers; managers of similar organizations, government and trade organization officials, fellow directors on outside boards; and so on. Robert Guest's study of foremen shows, likewise, that their contacts were numerous and wideranging, seldom involving fewer than twenty-five individuals, and often more than fifty.

As we shall see shortly, the manager cultivates such contacts largely to find information. In effect, the liaison role is devoted to building up the manager's own external information system—informal, private, oral but nevertheless effective.

INFORMATIONAL ROLES

By virtue of interpersonal contacts, both with subordinates and with the network of contacts, the manager emerges as the nerve center of his or her organizational unit. The manager may not know everything, but he or she typically knows more than any one of his or her subordinates.

Studies have shown this to hold for all managers, from street gang leaders to U.S. Presidents. In *The Human Group,* George C. Homans explains how, because they were at the center of the information flow in their own gangs and were also in close touch with other gang leaders, street gang leaders were better informed than any of their followers.[9] And Richard Neustadt describes the following account from his study of Franklin D. Roosevelt:

> The essence of Roosevelt's technique for information-gathering was competition. "He would call you in," one of his aides once told me, "and he'd ask you to get the story on some complicated business, and you'd come back after a couple of days of hard labor and present the juicy morsel you'd uncovered under a stone somewhere, and *then* you'd find out he knew all about it, along with something else you *didn't* know. Where he got this information from he wouldn't mention, usually, but

after he had done this to you once or twice you got damn careful about *your* information."[10]

We can see where Roosevelt "got this information" when we consider the relationship between the interpersonal and informational roles. As leader, managers have formal and easy access to each of their subordinates. Hence, as noted earlier, they tend to know more about their own units than anyone else does. In addition, their liaison contacts expose the managers to external information to which their subordinates often lack access. Many of those contacts are with other managers of equal status, who are themselves nerve centers in their own organizations. In this way, managers develops powerful data bases of information.

The processing of information is a key part of the manager's job. In my study, the chief executives spent 40 percent of their contact time on activities devoted exclusively to the transmission of information and 70 percent of their incoming mail was purely informational (as opposed to requests for action). The manager does not leave meetings or hang up the telephone in order to get back to work. In large part, communication *is* his or her work. Three roles describe the informational aspects of managerial work.

4. As *monitor,* the manager perpetually scans his or her environment for information, interrogates liaison contacts and subordinates, and receives unsolicited information, much of it as a result of the network of personal contacts he or she has developed. Remember that a good part of the information the manager collects in the monitor role arrives in oral form, often as gossip, hearsay, and speculation. By virtue of contacts, the manager has a natural advantage in collecting this soft information for his or her organization.

5. Managers must share and distribute much of this information. Information they glean from outside personal contacts may be needed within their organizations. In their *disseminator* role, managers pass some of their privileged information directly to their subordinates, who would otherwise have no access to it. Moreover, when their subordinates lack easy contact with one another, managers will sometimes pass information from one to another.

6. In their *spokesman* role, managers send some of their information to people outside their units—a president makes a speech to lobby for an organizational need, or a foreman suggests a product modification to a supplier. In addition, as part of the role of spokesman, every manager

must inform and satisfy the influential people who control his or her organizational unit. Chief executives especially may spend great amounts of time dealing with hosts of influencers. Directors and shareholders must be advised about financial performance, consumer groups must be assured that the organization is fulfilling its social responsibilities, and so on.

DECISIONAL ROLES

Information is not, of course, an end in itself; it is the basic input to decision-making. One thing is clear in the study of managerial work: The manager plays the major role in his or her unit's decision-making system. As its formal authority, only the manager can commit the unit to important new courses of action; and as its nerve center, only the manager has full and current information to make the set of decisions that determines the unit's strategy. Four roles describe the manager as decision-maker.

7. As *entrepreneur,* the manager seeks to improve his or her unit, to adapt it to changing conditions in the environment. In the monitor role, the president is constantly on the lookout for new ideas; when a good one appears, he or she initiates, in the context of the entrepreneur role, a development project that he or she may supervise or else delegate to an employee (perhaps with the stipulation that the manager must approve the final proposal).

There are two interesting features about development projects at the chief executive level. First, these projects do not involve single decisions or even unified clusters of decisions. Rather, they emerge as a series of small decisions and actions sequenced over time. Apparently, chief executives prolong each project so that they can fit it bit by bit into their busy, disjointed schedule and so that they can gradually come to comprehend the issue, if it is a complex one.

Second, the chief executives I studied supervised as many as fifty of these projects at the same time. Some projects entailed new products or processes; others involved public relations campaigns, resolution of a morale problem in a foreign division, integration of computer operations, various acquisitions, and so on. The chief executives appeared to maintain a kind of inventory of the development projects they themselves supervised—projects at various stages of development, some active and some in limbo. Like a juggler, they seemed to keep a number of projects in the air; periodically, one comes down, is given a new burst of energy and is sent back into orbit. At various intervals, they put new projects onstream and discard old ones.

8. While the entrepreneur role describes the manager as the voluntary initiator of change, the *disturbance handler* role shows the manager involuntarily responding to pressures. Here change is beyond the manager's control: A strike looms, a major customer has gone bankrupt, a supplier reneges on a contract.

It has been fashionable, I noted earlier, to compare the manager to an orchestra conductor, as Peter F. Drucker wrote in *The Practice of Management:*

> The manager has the task of creating a true whole that is larger than the sum of its parts, a productive entity that turns out more than the sum of the resources put into it. One analogy is the conductor of a symphony orchestra, through whose effort, vision and leadership individual instrumental parts that are so much noise by themselves become the living whole of music. But the conductor has the composer's score; he is only interpreter. The manager is both composer and conductor.[11]

Now consider the words of Leonard R. Sayles, who carried out systematic research on the manager's job. The manager

> . . . is like a symphony orchestra conductor, endeavouring to maintain a melodious performance in which the contributions of the various instruments are coordinated and sequenced, patterned and paced, while the orchestra members are having various personal difficulties, stage hands are moving music stands, alternating excessive heat and cold are creating audience and instrument problems, and the sponsor of the concert is insisting on irrational changes in the program.[12]

In effect, every manager must spend a good part of time responding to high-pressure disturbances. No organization can be so well run, so standardized, that it has considered every contingency in advance. Disturbances arise not only because poor managers ignore situations until they reach crisis proportions, but also because good managers cannot possibly anticipate all the consequences of the actions they take.

9. The third decisional role is that of *resource allocator.* To the manager falls the responsibility of deciding who will get what in the organizational unit. Perhaps the most important resource the manager allocates is his or her own time. Access to the manager constitutes exposure to the unit's nerve center and decision-maker. The manager is also charged with designing the unit's structure, that pattern of formal

relationships that determines how work is to be divided and coordinated.

Also, in his or her role as resource allocator the manager authorizes the important decisions of the unit before they are implemented. By retaining this power, the manager can ensure that decisions are interrelated—all must pass through a single brain. To fragment this power is to encourage discontinuous decision-making and a disjointed strategy.

I found that the chief executives of my study faced incredibly complex choices. They had to consider the impact of each decision on other decisions and on the organization's strategy. They had to ensure that the decision would be acceptable to those who influenced the organization, as well as ensure that resources would not be overextended. They had to understand the various costs and benefits as well as the feasibility of the proposal. They also had to consider questions of timing. All this was necessary for the simple approval of someone else's proposal. At the same time, however, delay could lose time, while quick approval could be ill considered and quick rejection could discourage a subordinate who had spent months developing a pet project. One common solution in approving projects seems to have been to pick the person instead of the proposal. That is, managers authorize those projects presented to them by people whose judgment they trust. But they cannot always use this simple dodge.

10. The final decisional role is that of *negotiator*. Studies of managerial work at all levels indicate that managers spend considerable time in negotiations: The president of the football team is called in to work out a contract with the holdout superstar; the corporation president leads his or her company's contingent to negotiate a new strike issue; the foreman argues a grievance problem to its conclusion with the shop steward. As Leonard Sayles puts it, negotiations are a "way of life" for the sophisticated manager.

The negotiations are duties of the manager's job; perhaps routine, they are not to be shirked. They are an integral part of the job, for only the manager has the authority to commit organizational resources in "real time," and only he or she has the nerve center information that important negotiations require.

THE INTEGRATED JOB

It should be clear by now that the ten roles I have been describing are not easily separable. They form a *gestalt,* an integrated whole. No role can be pulled out of the framework and the job be left intact. For example, a manager without liaison contacts lacks external information. As a result, he or she can neither disseminate the information subordinates need nor make decisions that adequately reflect external conditions. (In fact, this is a problem for the new person in a managerial position, since he or she cannot make effective decisions until the network of contacts has been built up.)

Herein lies a clue to the problems of team management. Two or three people cannot share a single managerial position unless they can act as one entity. That means they cannot divide up the ten roles unless they can very carefully reintegrate them. The real difficulty lies with the informational roles. Unless there can be full sharing of managerial information—and, as I pointed out earlier, it is primarily oral—team management breaks down. A single managerial job cannot be arbitrarily split, for example, into internal and external roles, for information from both sources must be brought to bear on the same decisions.

To say that the ten roles form a *gestalt* is not to say that all managers give equal attention to each role. In fact, I found in my review of the various research studies that

- Sales managers seem to spend relatively more of their time in the interpersonal roles, presumably a reflection of the extroverted nature of the marketing activity
- Production managers give relatively more attention to the decisional roles, presumably a reflection of their concern with efficient work flow
- Staff managers spend relatively more time in the informational roles, since they are experts who manage departments that advise other parts of the organization

Nevertheless, in all cases the interpersonal, informational, and decisional roles remain inseparable.

TOWARD MORE EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

What are the messages for management in this description? I believe, first and foremost, that this description of managerial work should itself prove more important to managers than any prescription they might derive from it. That is to say, *the managers' effectiveness is significantly influenced by their insight into their own work.* Their performance depends on how well they understand and respond to the pressures and dilemmas of the job.

Let us take a look at three specific areas of concern. For the most part, the managerial logjams—the dilemma of delegation, the data base centralized in one brain, and the problems of working with the management scientist—revolve around the oral nature of the manager's information. There are great dangers in centralizing the organization's data bank in the minds of its managers. When they leave, they take their memory with them. And when subordinates are out of convenient oral reach of the manager, they are at an informational disadvantage.

1. The manager is challenged to find systematic ways to share his or her privileged information. A regular debriefing session with key subordinates, a weekly memory dump on the dictating machine, the maintaining of a diary of important information for limited circulation, or other similar methods may ease the logjam of work considerably. Time spent disseminating this information will be more than regained when decisions must be made. Of course, some will raise the question of confidentiality. But managers would do well to weigh the risks of exposing privileged information against having subordinates who can make effective decisions.

If there is a single theme that runs through this description, it is that the pressures of his job drive the manager to be superficial in his or her actions—to overload him- or herself with work, encourage interruption, respond quickly to every stimulus, seek the tangible and avoid the abstract, make decisions in small increments, and do everything abruptly.

2. Here again, the manager is challenged to deal consciously with the pressures of superficiality by giving serious attention to the issues that require it, by stepping back from tangible bits of information in order to see a broad picture, and by making use of analytical inputs. Although effective managers have to be adept at responding quickly to numerous and varying problems, the danger in managerial work is that they will respond to every issue equally (and that means abruptly) and that they will never work the tangible bits and pieces of informational input into a comprehensive picture of their world.

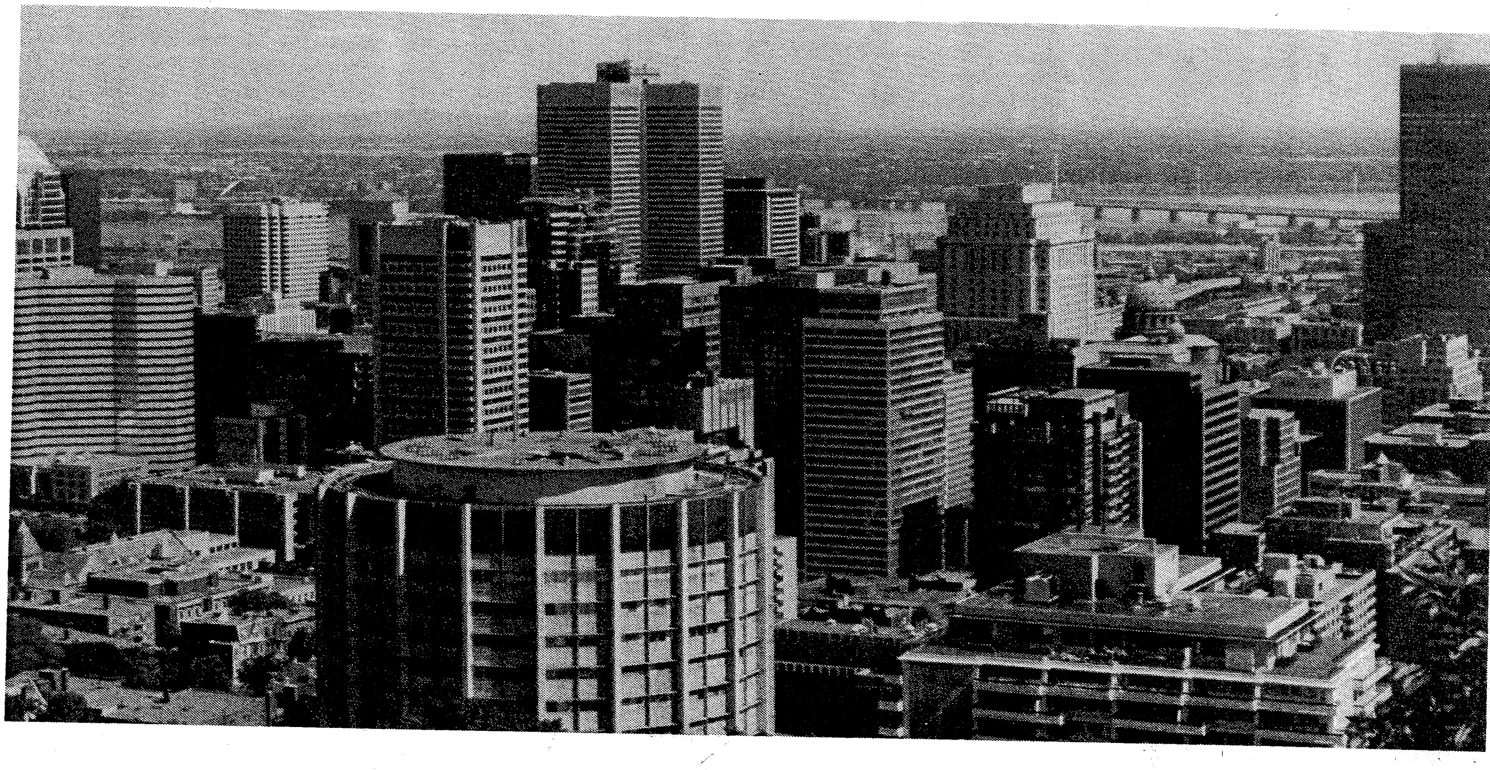
In dealing with complex issues, the senior manager has much to gain from a close relationship with the management scientists of his or her own organization. They have something important that he lacks—time to probe complex issues. An effective working relationship hinges on the resolution of what a colleague and I have called "the planning dilemma."[13] Managers have the information and the authority; analysts have the time and the technology. A successful working relationship between the two will be effected when the manager learns to share his or her information and the analyst learns to adapt to the manager's needs. For the analyst, adaptation means worrying less about the elegance of the method and more about its speed and flexibility.

3. The manager is challenged to gain control of his or her own time by turning obligations to advantage and by turning those things he or she wishes to do into obligations. The chief executives of my study initiated only 32 percent of their own contacts (and another 5 percent by mutual agreement). And yet to a considerable extent they seemed to control their time. There were two key factors that enabled them to do so.

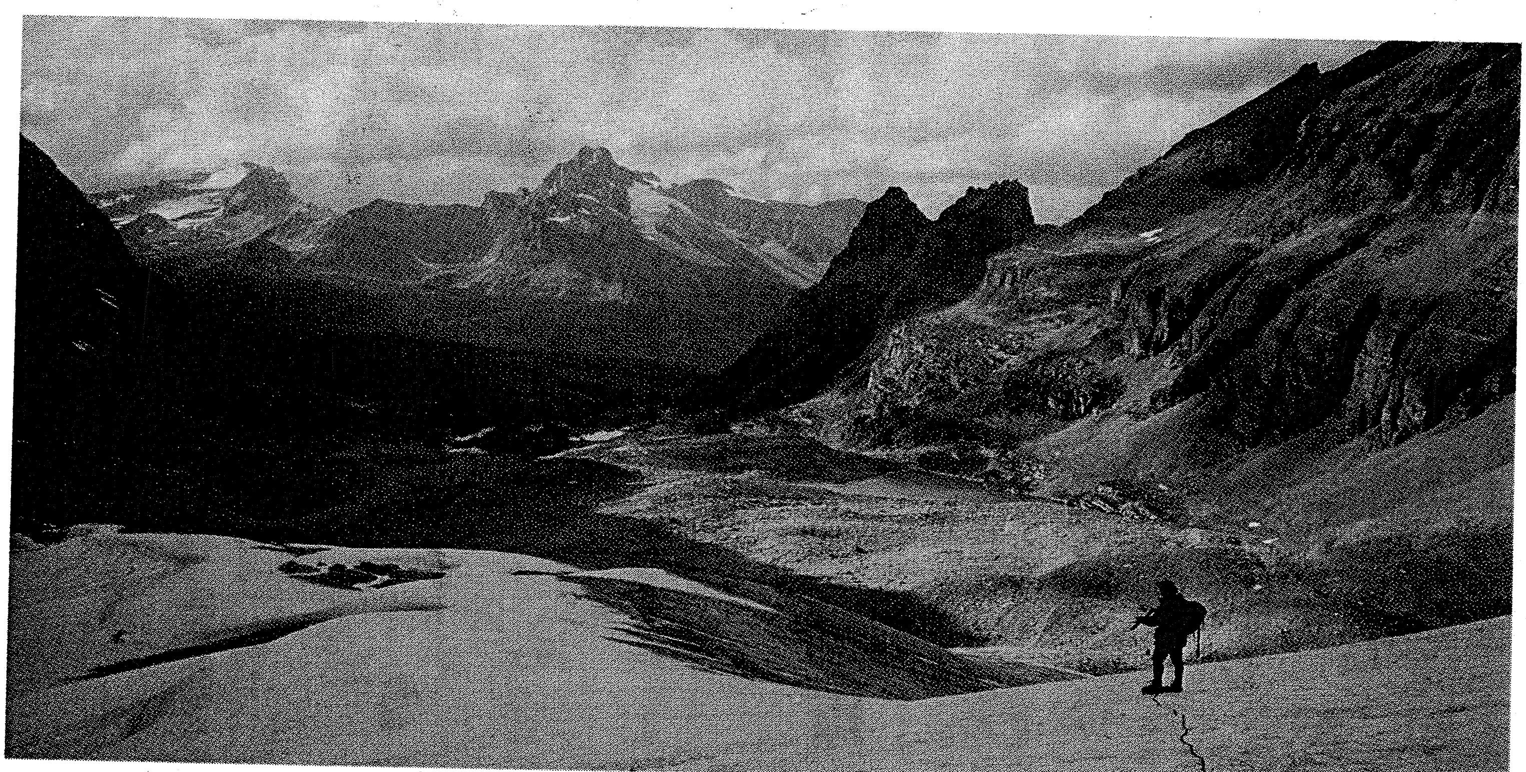
First, managers have to spend so much time discharging obligations that if they were to view them as just that, they would leave no mark on their organizations. The unsuccessful manager blames failure on the obligations; the effective manager turns obligations to his or her own advantage. A speech is a chance to lobby for a cause; a meeting is a chance to reorganize a weak department; a visit to an important customer is a chance to extract trade information.

Second, managers free some of their time to do those things that they—perhaps no one else—think important by turning them into obligations. Free time is made, not found, in the manager's job; it is forced into the schedule. Hoping to leave some time open for contemplation or general planning is tantamount to hoping that the pressures of the job will go away. The manager who wants to innovate initiates a project and obligates others to report back to him or her; the manager who needs certain external information establishes channels that will automatically keep him or her informed; the manager who has to tour facilities commits him- or herself publicly to doing so.

No job is more vital to our society than that of the manager. It is the manager who determines whether our social institutions serve us well or whether they squander our talents and resources. It is time to strip away the folklore of managerial work so that we can begin the difficult task of making significant improvements in its performance.



This book is written for those of us who spend our public lives dealing with organizations and our private lives escaping from them.



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