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## THE QUALITY OF MANAGEMENT

*A Two-Sided Story*

### Introduction

When Dr. William Glasser's book, The Control Theory Manager, was published in 1994, more than forty years had passed since W. Edwards Deming suggested the need to empower employees in order to improve quality and productivity. Although Deming proved such a strategy has many positive results, American businesses have shown reluctance toward adjusting their style of management.

In his book, Dr. Glasser's revisited Deming's ideas. In doing so, he took a close look at some of the issues underlying the reluctance toward adjusting management styles. As his title suggests, Dr. Glasser theorizes about control itself, and how managers must become aware of both when and how to give control, or in other words, how to empower employees. He carefully guides his reader to his conclusion that such empowerment not only has positive results on the quality of the work produced, but also on the business as a whole.

The information in this handout is distilled from Dr. Glasser's book.

### Styles of Management

Operating from a standpoint of good common sense, managers are often convinced that they *know* why the people they manage behave the way they do. Yet, when things do not run as expected, they're puzzled. As a result, it doesn't always occur to them that their common sense could be leading them astray, and that it could be causing reductions in productivity and the quality of the work being produced.

Unfortunately, it usually takes some sort of shock for managers to realize they may not be managing their company for success. It takes something like the loss of their competitive edge, or even something greater, such as economic failure for them to begin to understand.

Common sense, while a necessary tool to have at their disposal, seems only to reveal part of the picture to them. Indeed, it could be said that common sense should get managers to realize that if someone realizes they can purchase a comparable, if not superior product from a different source, why shouldn't they.

During the 1980s and 90s, it became possible to buy superior products from Japan. And, one reason it was possible for the Japanese to produce comparable, if not superior products more cheaply than American businesses was the manner in which Japanese businesses were managed.

Simply put, Japanese businesses were managed much more effectively than American businesses. And, part of the reason for this difference in management was the fact the Japanese used Deming's ideas, embracing what's termed a *lead management* style. As will be shown below, *lead management* differs significantly from that which is used in many American businesses, the *boss management* style.

Lead management is based on individual empowerment, whereas boss management is based on vesting power into the hands of a few, or into one hand.

### Boss Management

The following points provide a summary of the techniques of the boss management style:

1. The boss sets the task and defines the standards by which employees are expected to accomplish a task, and these things are usually done without any consultation from those doing the tasks.
2. There is little room for compromise, and employees are expected to adjust their performance to the task as it has been defined or to suffer any consequences the boss deems appropriate for failure to do so.
3. Rather than show how a task should be accomplished, a boss manager tells employees how the work is to be done, rarely asking for input on how the task might be done better.
4. The boss, or someone the boss designates, inspects and evaluates the work. Employees are seldom involved in these inspections and evaluations.
5. Coercion, usually in the form of punishment, is used almost exclusively as the prime motivational technique to get employees to accomplish the boss-directed tasks.

6. As if to say it's the way it should be, bosses tend to encourage an adversarial environment, where it's the boss (or boss designate) versus the employee.

## Lead Management

The following points provide a summary of the techniques of the lead management style:

1. Lead managers engage the workers in an ongoing, honest discussion of both the cost and the quality of the work needed to ensure the business is successful.
2. Employees are encouraged to provide any ideas that will improve quality and lower costs.
3. The lead manager (or someone designated by him or her) models the tasks to be used in the production of high quality products.
4. Employees are not just responsible for the product, they are given control over the work required to produce it.
5. Lead managers ensure employees are aware that the quality of a product is not something that is adjusted after a product is produced. Instead it must be affected during its production.
6. With the understanding that they are closest to it while it is being produced, employees are relied upon to evaluate the quality of their work, thereby eliminating inspectors and inspections stations.
7. Lead managers ensure the atmosphere surrounding employees is as non-corrosive and non-adversarial as possible.

## A Dilemma

When he first posited his ideas associating management and quality, Deming argued that when a business failed to meet its production goals, 15% of the problem rested with the employee and 85% the system. As he tested his ideas, he shifted his values, placing 98% of the problem on the system. In addition, he stated categorically that only management could change the system.

When things go wrong, when production goals are missed, when quality is compromised, the tendency is to blame someone. Unfortunately, the common tendency is to blame the employee. But, as difficult as it can be to comprehend, it is often the system and not the employee that creates or exacerbates such problems. It seems this fact is often missed by those entrenched in a management style that bosses rather than leads.

The difficulty of making an effective shift from one management style to another depends upon the degree to which managers are willing to become educated about their style and its effect on quality and productivity. Their willingness to become educated depends upon how the view they take upon the issue of control.

## Conditions of Quality

It's difficult to shift a business from one style of management to another. To be effective, such changes cannot happen overnight. They take time. They also require focus, and the following list contains issues that should be kept in focus as the changes take place. They are a synthesis of the points raised by Dr. Glasser in his book and those Deming suggested in his 14 Points for Management.

1. The work environment must be warm and supportive.
2. The workers must trust the managers, and the managers must trust the workers.
3. Employees should be given tasks that are useful, pertinent, and relevant.
4. Employees should be encouraged to contribute ideas to what is being done.
5. All should be asked to do the best they can, with managers managing by example.
6. From the moment they are hired, all employees should be given proper and useful training, not only in what they are to perform, but how to evaluate their own performance.
7. Whether self-made or management made, all evaluations of an employee's performance should focus on the task that needs to be performed, not the person performing it.
8. All employees should be allowed to take pride in the outcome of the production process.

## The Goal

Deming said it succinctly, "The goal is clear. The productivity of systems must be increased. The key is to change the understanding of our managers and the people to whom they report about what it means to be a good manager."

To this Deming added that there are two more things that should always be in the mind of the manager, and they are:

1. A manager is responsible for consistency of purpose and continuity in the organization. The manager is solely responsible to see that there is a future for the workers. (No matter what manager say, they are the ones that convince or fail to convince employees that they are concerned about their future.)
2. Employees work within a system. Managers should work within the system to see that it produces the highest quality product at the lowest possible cost. The distinction is crucial. Employees work in the system, and managers work on the system. No one else (only the manager) is responsible for they system as a whole and improving it.

## Reference

Glasser, William, The Control Theory Manager, Harper-Collins Publishers, Inc. New York, NY, 1994