

Management: A Very Short Introduction

By John Hendry

Questions for Thought and Discussion

Conceptions of managing

- A popular theme in Victorian literature was 'how to manage' a husband or wife, meaning how to control them or get them to behave in the way you wanted or thought appropriate. Husbands generally sought to keep wives in their place and wives to keep husbands sober and out of trouble. How would you respond now to this concept of 'managing' a partner, and what thoughts does this raise for you about managing other relationships, in a business or organization? Under what conditions might control be possible? Under what conditions might it be desirable?
- Building on this, to what extent do you think that parents should exert control over family life, as compared with helping family members do what they want, or simply trying to keep things on an even keel? To what extent would your views carry over to managers and organizational life?

Approaches to managing

- Considering the mechanizing, socializing and individualizing tendencies in management, which is the more dominant in the organization with which you're most familiar?
- To what extent is this a consequence of the managers' own tendencies, the organization's history, its particular function or the context in which it operates?
- Do you have a preferred approach yourself? If so, why? Does it reflect your belief in how people behave and are motivated, your experience of how well different approaches work, or the ways in which you think people should be treated generally?
- What is the trade-off between the short-term efficiency of a management approach and its long-term effectiveness?
- Think of some leaders (in business, politics or sport). What makes them good or bad leaders? Do the same qualities make good or bad managers?
- Think of people who have been in positions of authority over you (parents, teachers, bosses). How important are the following qualities (a) in earning your respect and (b) in getting you to perform: (i) charisma, (ii) status, (iii) honesty, (iv) kindness, (v) competence, (vi) focus, (vii) drive, (viii) hard work, (ix) insight? What does this tell you about the art of managing?
- Imagine three situations. In one you have a regular job and a steady salary. In the second you are paid and retained (or otherwise) according to individual performance measures. In the third the performance measures are set for the group of which you are a part, not individually. In which situation do you think you'd do the best job? Which would give you most job satisfaction? What additional management measures might be needed to make each approach work effectively?
- To what extent do you think the manager or supervisor of a team should be a monitor and to what extent a mentor? How, in your experience, do things work out in practice, and what might be done to make them work out differently?

Managing across cultures

- What can we learn from the attitudes of managers in cultures other than our own? Is the American dominated management literature something from which everybody can learn, or does it only really apply to America?
- To what extent should an international organization be managed consistently across its local offices, and to what extent should management practices be tailored to the local cultural context?

Sense-making, morals and mistakes

- Tell the story of your life, or of your career, in under a page. Would you have told the same story, up to that point, three or five years ago? If not, what has changed in the way you tell it, and why?
- Think of yourself in relation to some work colleagues, fellow student or friends. How do you think you have grown or developed over the last few years? How do you think they have grown and developed? Now, how do *they* think they have grown and developed? How do *they* think you have grown and developed? How well does a manager need to understand the people for whom she's responsible in order to do a good job managing?
- Think of important judgments or decisions that you have made, and your reasons for them. Which came first, the judgments/decisions, or the rationale?
- Think of mistakes you've made, that have affected other people. (Oh yes, you have!) How did you respond? How, on reflection, do you think you should have responded?
- Think of mistakes other people have made, that have affected you. How did you respond? How, on reflection, do you think you should have responded?
- 'All's fair in love, war and business.' Does anything go in business, so long as you get results, or should management be governed by the same moral values as we apply to friendships and communities?

Other books by John Hendry

Hendry, John *Between Enterprise and Ethics: Business and Management in a Bimoral Society* (Oxford University Press, 2004)