

RELATIONSHIPS IN ORGANISATIONS

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People are influenced by other people, by concepts, and by physical objects.

Influences Controlled by People

If I am a manager and I want a certain person to carry out a certain course of action, I will probably meditate: (a) *I want this done* (b) *Can I reward him in some way for doing what I want?* (c) *How can I find out if he does it?* (d) *Does he understand our relationship?*

This can be expressed pictorially (*figure I*) or diagrammatically (*figure II*). In the latter, a second line U denotes the emotional (unconscious) influence.

The Influence Cycle

The people involved are:

- (a) The person or 'source' of influence
- (b) The person or 'subject' being influenced.

The other symbols signify what may be termed the five principal Factors of Influence:

1. C: A's conscious influence over B — usually his power to punish or reward him.
2. U: A's unconscious (emotional) influence over B.
3. Inf.: A's information on B's activities.
4. Int.: The interest about which A may influence B.
5. 'Interpretation' B's interpretation of this whole cycle.

Influences originating in concepts and in Physical Objects

People are also influenced by concepts and by physical objects. It is of course very arbitrary whether a particular influence is described as based on a person, a concept or a physical object.

Application

An attempt is made in this article to analyse relationships in terms of the above factors of influence. It is suggested that such analysis is of value: (1) in the classification of management practices; (2) in the study of organisation attitudes and their modification.

An analysis of this type can lead to the discovery of a range of changes which should, and often must, be made, if organisation attitude to an idea is to change.

Typical weaknesses found in influence cycles may be depicted pictorially (*figure III*). These realistic interpretations by this employee may be expressed diagrammatically (*figure IV*).

In *figure IV* the blocking in each square indicates the actual presence of a particular factor, as estimated by an observer, compared with its ideal presence.

Figure I

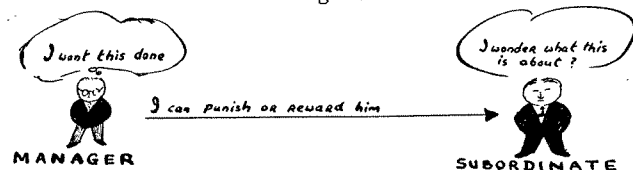
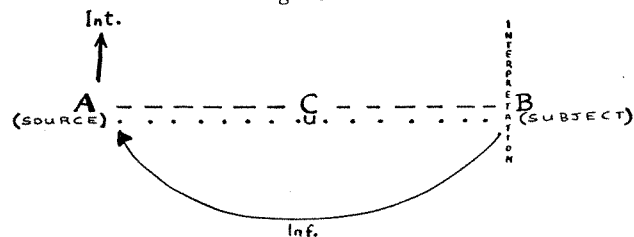


Figure II



The Factors of Influence

It is profitable to study the various factors of influence in some detail. Their operation is vital to the co-ordinated functioning of an organisation:

(A) Information

In this article two aspects of information flow must be considered.

1. Its importance in the individual influence cycle
2. Its importance in overall co-ordination.

In elaboration of this second aspect it may be stated that effective co-ordination of an organisation depends on a flow of adequate and correct, but sifted, information to one man or to a group of men at the top level.

Information flow depends on:

1. The capacity (quantative and qualitative) of the channels conveying it, and their willingness to carry it.
2. The stimulus the channels have to convey the information.

The first of these is readily understood. If it is necessary to increase the information carrying capacity of, say, a line of staff, more capable people may be employed, additional channels may be set up (e.g. functional departments), participative management practices may be introduced etc.

The second is seldom discussed. It is suggested that a useful concept in this connection is that of Potential Information Flow. This may be defined

as that information which *may* flow through minor channels, as distinct from that which *should* be carried by the major channels. The form of it most easily understood, is probably that which the boss creates when he makes regular tours of inspection. That he may notice things, means that a potential channel of information is created. The boss hopes that as a result of his regular tours, difficulties will either be rectified as they occur, or that he will be informed of them.

The value of a potential channel of information is out of proportion to its capacity. Its value lies, not in the information it carries, but in the information it stimulates to flow through the main channels, usually the line staff.

The following is a list of management practices which seem to stimulate rising information. '1' against an item, indicates that it strengthens the main channels; '2' against an item, indicates that, as a channel of potential information, it stimulates the main channels.

- The practice of 'one man, one boss' (1)
- Possible investigation by the boss (2)
- Functional departments (1 & 2)
- Employees of ample and independent status (1 & 2)
- Management Development (1)
- Counselling (2)
- Promotion (1 & 2)
- Job rotation (2)
- Representative action; e.g. works councils, trade unions, junior boards (2)
- Participative management practices (1)
- Report writing routines (1)
- Presence of a consultant or outside specialist (2).
- Powerful natural tendencies exist in any or-

Figure III

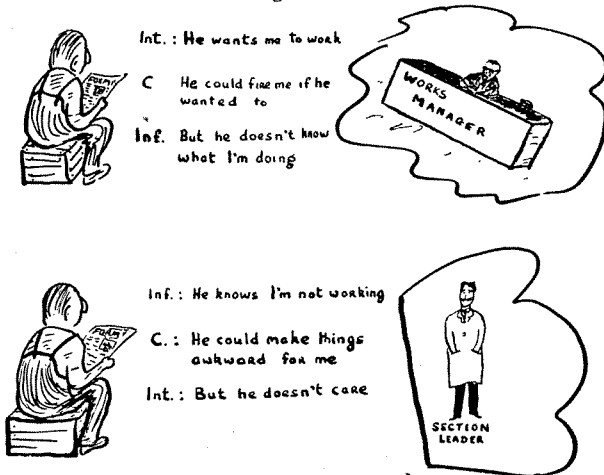
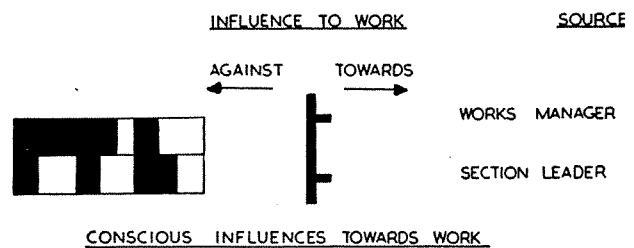


Figure IV



ganisation to prevent information from rising. In some they seem to succeed. One is reminded of Parkinson's description of the industrial disease Injelititis.

(B) Conscious Influence

Conscious influence is generally found to depend on one person's ability to punish or reward another. This does not always appear helpful to the smooth running of an organisation: a worker, for instance, can exert considerable conscious influence over his boss by refusing to use initiative in his work, or by insisting on working to rule.

Such influence depends on:—

1. *The ability of the 'source' to control punishment and reward.* Unless a manager stands in reasonable esteem with his superiors and colleagues, his recommendations concerning his subordinate's career, salary, bonus, etc., may not be respected.
2. *The 'rewardability' of the 'subject'.* It is not only to have people available for promotion, that managements create a 'pool of talent'. The men in such a pool, being rewardable, are most likely to respond to direction.

(C) Unconscious Influence

This is of great importance. It is however, the purpose of this article to concentrate on those influences which are specifically not unconscious.

(D) Source's Interest

Little need be said about this, other than to emphasise the fact that an expressed interest does not necessarily indicate a real one. Subordinates soon recognise whether a man's interest

in an idea is genuine or only lip service, and pay attention accordingly.

(E) Subject's Interpretation

The outcome of one person's attempt to influence another does not depend finally on the reality of the situation, but on the situation as the subject sees it. In management-union-worker relationships, the factor of interpretation, and in particular its aspect of confidence, becomes of paramount importance.

Factors of Influence and Other Sources of Influence

Influence from concepts and physical objects is generally unconscious. The value to a man of learning about, say, safety engineering, as an enhancement to his salary earning capacity, may however be regarded as one way in which a concept can influence a man consciously.

Recommendations for Further Reading

Management theory has not yet reached the stage of having a uniform discipline or terminology. Background to the particular approach detailed above will be found in publications discussing the Balance of Satisfaction concept, in Jacques' concept of the Time Span of Responsibility, and in the work of the Field Theorists.

Fogarty, Michael P., *Personality and Group Relations in Industry*, Longmans 1956.

Jacques, Elliott, *Measurement of Responsibility*, Tavistock Publications, 1956.

Lester, Coch and French, *Overcoming Resistance to Change* Human Relations, August 1948.

Viteles, M.S., *Motivation and Morale in Industry*, New York, Norton 1953.