



## Publications and Case Studies

### The Creative Manager

Man is a prisoner of his own way of thinking and of his own stereotypes of himself. His machine for thinking, the brain, has been programmed for a vanished world. This old world was characterised by the need to manage things - stone, wood, iron. The new world is characterised by the need to manage complexity. Complexity is the very stuff of today's world. The tool for handling complexity is ORGANISATION. But our concepts of organisation belong to the much less complex old world, not to the much more complex today's world. Still less are they adequate to deal with the next epoch of complexification, in a world of explosive change. Stafford Beer (1975)

Fifty years ago management development was virtually non-existent. It was generally felt that anyone with the potential to become a good manager would naturally rise to the top. Then, after the experience gained in the Second World War with systems of management in the military, people started looking at what made a good manager in business. Could people be educated and trained in the art of management? And if so, how? This resulted in many of the military learnings being applied to the development of more professional business management.

The effect of this was a creative and dramatic step forward, changing the face of organisations worldwide. They have not only become relatively more efficient; they have also been able to grow in both size and complexity. The emergence of the multinational corporation, for instance, has depended upon the efficient teaching, organisation, and dissemination of management practices. This has allowed capital and labour to be brought into relationship in the most effective way possible, maximising the earning capacity and profitability of the organisation.

As this 'professionalisation' has grown, so has the need for specific leadership and management skills. Most of these have been developed and taught by the many different business schools that have flourished. These range from the high-profile, highly academic university schools to the local college programmes that now exist throughout the world, in both developed and underdeveloped countries. Complementing these are a plethora of in-house courses. The net result has been a revolution in the way organisations are structured, the way they conduct their business, and the way they treat their people.

In its early years, this emerging management science focused on the formulation and standardisation of management practices. Its priorities were clearer and tighter accounting, better budgeting, long-term planning, more

effective corporate structures, personnel organisation, efficient production and the minimisation of wasted time and materials. In the 1960s and 1970s marketing and market research became another important focus. And in the 1980s, information technology skills have also emerged as a priority.

Such skills were, and are, seen as the 'hard' skills necessary for the successful management of both corporate and public sector organisations. Yet, throughout this period, the more human aspects of management have also become increasingly important. Today, in larger corporations many managers spend most of their time managing other managers. These tasks require 'softer' management skills such as leadership, communication, delegation and motivation.

At the same time, increased decentralisation, flatter organisational structures and demands for greater autonomy have meant that more and more responsibility is being placed in the hands of individuals. As a result there is also a widespread need for greater self-management. People need to manage their time better, learn how to cope with stress, balance their work life and personal life, and handle their relationships.

At the same time people are asking for greater recognition and autonomy. They are not willing to be managed in the post-war militaristic style and 'follow orders'. They are demanding to be treated as individuals with their own needs and concerns. Work is no longer just where they do a job, it is a place where people can express their values, their potentials and their creativity. For many people earning a good living is not enough; they also want an inner richness, they want to feel valued, productive and fulfilled human beings.

These are needs that leaders must now take very seriously. They must find ways to bridge the growing need to manage the personal world of the human being and the intractable demands of

highly professional management. This will require new attitudes to management and a willingness to explore unfamiliar areas.

Another factor with major implications for leaders is the increasing pace of life. As we move into the 1990s and beyond, we will, in all probability, encounter yet more rapid rates of change and uncertainty than today. Handling such a future will no longer be simply a question of more efficient systems and structures; these 'softer' management skills will become the new priority. The need for greater flexibility of thinking will become paramount. The organisations that will survive in the coming years will be those that are willing to let go of inappropriate attitudes and respond creatively to the pressures of change. This applies to all types and all levels of organisation, from government and business to the family and the community.

These more human skills are far less tangible than accounting, marketing or computer skills. As a result they are sometimes seen as the poor relation of business management. Yet intangible as these skills may be, they are critical. They are the lubricant of any organisation, and vital to its success.

When these more personal skills are taught, they are usually taught in a similar way to the 'harder' management skills. People learn 'how to' do them and go on trainings to practise their learnings. But the success of such approaches is limited. This partial effectiveness only serves to reinforce the view that such skills are 'soft' - there is little hard change to show for them.

The development of these skills requires not just training but also a much deeper understanding of ourselves. This means helping people acknowledge their own inner struggles, recognise why they sometimes react as they do, learn more about their own needs and motivations, discover how to manage their attitudes, appreciate their

strengths and weaknesses, understand their own creative processes, and on this basis learn how to empathise with and understand the inner worlds of others.

Learning to tackle these more difficult facets of leadership and management is not an easy task. These inner dimensions are harder to see, harder to measure, harder to understand, much harder to handle, and even harder to develop. As a result little time has been spent exploring how to work in these areas. This is one reason why the 'training' of these self-management skills is so much more difficult than the skills with which we manage the world around us. In this respect, these are the 'hard' management skills of the first decade of the 21st century.

As consultants, the message we receive from many corporate leaders is that the most difficult and compelling task they face today is to create environments that truly empower other people. In other words, to build organisations that respect individuals and allow them to release their innate creative potential. They also know that unless they do so they will not be able to cope with the complexity and changes of the future. They are realising that difficult and hard to develop as these human skills may be, they are essential to our survival-individual, corporate, and perhaps global as well.

This is the new frontier of management science. Like all frontiers it is full of possibility. It is a place for explorers and people breaking free from outdated ways. It is uncharted and unfamiliar; yet it can be exhilarating and rewarding. It is a land of new hope. Like most new frontiers it is also fraught with hardships. Its pioneers are often met with scepticism and misunderstanding, and there may be many false starts and disappointments. It is also hard work.

In the next decade we expect to see more and more people dedicated to this new frontier, to the

'hard' skills of understanding both themselves and other people. The coming challenge of management science will be to re-vision the development of people, and raise the human audit to the level of the financial audit as a signal of the true health of an organisation.

The task ahead may not be easy, but we are encouraged by the willingness of many people we meet to grapple with these 'new' hard management skills. This book is a small attempt on our part to respond to these people. It is a book for anyone who is concerned about how we place the human being at the centre of our future, and release the wealth of creativity that we all share.

The first chapter presents the context of the book. It looks at the creativity and other inner qualities required to manage ever-increasing change. Chapter 2 introduces the creative manager and his\* role in the world today. We see that creative managers are not themselves new, but can be found throughout history.

They are characterised by their willingness to look at their times through fresh eyes, and make their vision a reality. Today many people find a focus for their expression through organisations, for this is where they find the greatest leverage for their vision. The way of these creative managers is a way founded upon a deeper understanding of human creativity; in this respect it is an inner way.

The third chapter explores this inner way. It looks in depth at the various phases of the creative process that runs throughout our lives. We considered writing each phase as a separate chapter, but decided instead to present the process as a whole, emphasising the dynamic relationship between the inner and outer aspects of creativity. Many of us currently have a good understanding about managing the outer aspects, but the more mysterious inner dimensions of the process are much more difficult to handle. These are the frontiers which we believe difficult to handle. These

are the frontiers which we believe management science can now no longer afford to ignore. This chapter is therefore the thread with which we weave the rest of the book.

In the fourth and fifth chapters we lay the ground for releasing creativity. We see how crucial it is to challenge all our assumptions and mindsets. This means being willing to look at the world through fresh eyes. It is about freeing ourselves to live in the present rather than on the basis of past attitudes and beliefs. Chapter 6 looks at the increasing pressures of living in a world of accelerating change, and at how stress can limit our creativity. It brings an important new dimension to the book. Stress is seen not only as a danger, but also as an opportunity - the opportunity to discover self-mastery. For the creative manager it opens another door on to his inner world.

Chapter 7 shows how the new frontiers of management we have been discussing, are reflected in the dramatic changes taking place in individual values. Increased self-awareness, so important for releasing creativity, is something that more and more people are exploring. It points to hidden opportunities behind the Information Age.

In some respects. Chapter 8 is the heart of the book. It is about a deeper understanding of our selves, and how that helps us manage the more mysterious aspects of the creative process. It is about listening to our own inner wisdom.

Creative managers are not just concerned with their inner realities: they are men and women of action. As such they are inevitably in interaction with other people. Learning to work with others is the foundation stone of any organisation.

The final chapter concerns itself with the hard work of applying our awareness and creativity in our relationships. We ask: How can we improve the quality of our communication? What makes

a creative team work? How can others be empowered to become creative managers in their own right?

Although this book is written largely in the context of our work in corporations, and with managers in the conventional sense, it draws upon what is common to us all as human beings, and is written with us all in mind. It is based on our experience of life, and is written that we may each become the most creative manager in our lives.

*\* The dreaded 'he' dilemma. As every alternative way of denoting the neutral pronoun that we have considered is either cumbersome or breaks the reader's flow, we have used 'he' throughout in its androgynous sense of 'he or she' (except where the masculine sense is clearly intended), and sometimes 'she' in a similar neutral sense.*