MacGregor.

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No question about it--some managers are better organized than others, but how often have you run into a really well organized manager--I mean really well organized? Not too often, I bet! In the course of my work I run into hundreds of managers a year, yet I can think of only one who managed to be superorganized--to the point where he had time to play an enormous amount of golf. As further proof of his organization, consider this: About two years after I ran into MacGregor, which incidentally is not his real name, he was promoted to the post of chief of operations at the corporate level--a fact I discovered when I saw his face looking out at me from the financial section of my newspaper above the announcement of his new executive assignment.

My encounter with MacGregor came about during the course of a study of the extent to which operating managers actually use participative management techniques in their dealings with subordinates. The problem with an inquiry of this nature is that nearly every manager either says that he uses a participative approach (because isn't that what every good manager does?) or maybe honestly believes that this is his preferred modus operandi; in any event, what I was interested in was information about behavior, not about beliefs (pious or otherwise). So I had to develop an indirect approach for use with the managers being interviewed and follow it up with some questions directed at the subordinates they supervised. Accordingly, I developed a questionnaire that I used in interviewing more than 100 managers in ten major U.S. and Canadian firms. The first item on the questionnaire asked whether the interviewee held regular meetings with his subordinates; if so, how often; and what was the nature of the matters discussed. Finally, it tried to determine whether subordinates were offered the opportunity to initiate discussion and actively participate in the decision-making process or were merely afforded the opportunity to hear about decisions the boss had made.

MacGregor, who at the time was manager of one of the largest refineries in the country, was the last of more than 100 managers I interviewed in the course of the study. Although the interview had been scheduled in advance, the exact time had been left open; I was to call MacGregor at his office early in the week that I would be in the vicinity and set up a specific date and time.

Here's how that phone call went: The switchboard operator answered with the name of the refinery. When I asked for MacGregor's office, a male voice almost instantly said, "Hello." I then asked for MacGregor, whereupon the voice responded, "This is he." I should have recognized at once that this was no ordinary manager; he answered his own phone instantly, as though he had been waiting for it to ring. To my question about when it would be convenient for me to come see him, he replied, "Anytime." I said, "Would today be all right?" His response was, "Today, tomorrow, or Wednesday would be okay; or you could come Thursday, except don't come between 10:00 a.m. and noon; or you could come Friday or next week--anytime." I replied feebly, "I just want to fit in with your plans." Then he said, "You are just not getting the message; it makes no difference to me when you come. I have nothing on the books except to play golf and see you. Come in anytime--I don't have to be notified in advance, so I'll be seeing you one of these days," and then he hung up. I was dumbfounded. Here was a highly placed executive with apparently nothing to do except play golf and talk to visitors.

I took MacGregor at his word and drove over immediately to see him without any further announcement of my visit. MacGregor's office, in a small building at one corner of the refinery, adjoined that of his secretary--who, when I arrived, was knitting busily and, without dropping a stitch, said to me, "You must be Mr. Carlisle; he's in there," indicating MacGregor's office with a glance at a connecting door.

MacGregor's office was large and had a big window overlooking the refinery, a conference table with eight chairs arranged around it (one of which, at the head, was more comfortable and imposing than the rest), an engineer's file cabinet with a series of wide drawers, two easy chairs, a sofa, a coffee table with a phone on it, and a desk. The desk had been shoved all the way into a corner; there was no way a chair could be slipped in behind it, and it was covered with technical journals. A lamp stood on the desk, but its plug was not connected to an outlet. There was no phone on the desk. MacGregor, a tall, slender man with a tanned face, stood by the window peering absently into space. He turned slowly when I entered his office and said, "You must be Carlisle. The head office told me you wanted to talk to me about the way we run things here. Sit down on the sofa and fire away.".

MACGREGOR'S MODUS OPERANDI"Do you hold regular meetings with your subordinates?" I asked.

"Yes, I do," he replied.

"How often?" I asked.

"Once a week, on Thursdays, between 10:00 a.m. and noon; that's why I couldn't see you then," was his response.

"What sorts of things do you discuss?" I queried, following my interview guide.

"My subordinates tell me about the decisions they've made during the past week," he explained.

"Then you believe in participative decision making," I commented.

"No--as a matter of fact, I don't," said MacGregor.

"Then why hold the meetings?" I asked. "Why not just tell your people about the operating decisions you've made and let them know how to carry them out?".

"Oh, I don't make their decisions for them and I just don't believe in participating in the decisions they should be making, either. We hold the weekly meeting so that I can keep informed on what they're doing and how. The meeting also gives me a chance to appraise their technical and managerial abilities," he explained. "I used to make all the operating decisions myself, but I quit doing that a few years ago when I discovered my golf game was going to hell because I didn't have enough time to practice. Now that I've quit making other people's decisions, my game is back where it should be.".

"You don't make operating decisions anymore?" I asked in astonishment.

"No," he replied. Sensing my incredulity, he added, "Obviously you don't believe me. Why not ask one of my subordinates? Which one do you want to talk to?".

"I haven't any idea; I don't even know how many subordinates you have, let alone their names. You choose one," I suggested.

"No, I wouldn't do that--for two reasons. First, I don't make decisions, and second, when my subordinate confirms that I don't make decisions, you'll say that it's a put-up job, so here is a list of my eight immediate subordinates, the people who report directly to me. Choose one name from it and I'll call him and you can talk to him," said MacGregor.

"Okay--Johnson, then. I'll talk to him if he's free," said I.

"I'm sure he's able to talk to you. I'll call him and tell him you're on the way over." Reaching for the phone, he determined that Johnson wasn't doing anything, either, and would be happy to have someone to talk to.

SUBORDINATES' VIEWS OF MACGREGORI walked over to Johnson's unit and found him to be in his early thirties. After a couple of minutes of casual conversation, I discovered that MacGregor and all eight of his subordinates were chemical engineers. Johnson said, "I suppose MacGregor gave you that bit about his not making decisions, didn't he? That man is a gas.".

"It isn't true though, is it? He does make decisions, doesn't he?" I asked.

"No, he doesn't; everything he told you is true. He simply decided not to get involved in decisions that his subordinates are being paid to make. So he stopped making them, and they tell me he plays a lot of golf in the time he saves," said Johnson.

Then I asked Johnson whether he tried to get MacGregor to make a decision and his response was:.

"Only once. I had been on the job for only about a week when I ran into an operating problem I couldn't solve, so I phoned MacGregor. He answered the phone with that sleepy 'Hello of his. I told him who I was and that I had a problem. His response was instantaneous: 'Good, that's what you're being paid to do, solve problems, and then he hung up. I was dumbfounded. I didn't really know any of the people I was working with, so because I didn't think I had any other alternative, I called him back, got the same sleepy 'Hello, and again identified myself. He replied sharply, 'I thought I told you that you were paid to solve problems. Do you think that I should do your job as well as my own? When I insisted on seeing him about my problem, he answered, 'I don't know how you expect me to help you. You have a technical problem and I don't go into the refinery any more; I used to, but my shirts kept getting dirty from the visits and my wife doesn't like washing all the grime out of them, so I pretty much stick in my office. Ask one of the other men. They're all in touch with what goes on out there. .

"I didn't know which one to consult, so I insisted again on seeing him. He finally agreed--grudgingly--to see me right away, so I went over to his office and there he was in his characteristic looking-out-the-window posture. When I sat down, he started the dirty-shirt routine but when he saw that I was determined to involve him in my problems, he sat down on the sofa in front of his coffee table and, pen in hand, prepared to write on a pad of paper. He asked me to state precisely what the problem was and he wrote down exactly what I said. Then he asked what the conditions for its solution were. I replied that I didn't know what he meant by that question. His response was, 'If you don't know what conditions have to be satisfied for a solution to be reached, how do you know when you've solved the problem? I told him I'd never thought of approaching a problem that way and he replied, 'Then you'd better start. I'll work though this one with you this time, but don't expect me to do your problem solving for you because that's your job, not mine. .

"I stumbled through the conditions that would have to be satisfied by the solution. Then he asked me what alternative approaches I could think of. I gave him the first one I could think of--let's call it X--and he wrote it down and asked me what would happen if I did X. I replied with my answer--let's call it A. Then he asked me how A compared with the conditions I had established for the solution of the problem. I replied that it did not meet them. MacGregor told me that I'd have to think of another. I came up with Y, which I said would yield result B, and this still fell short of the solution conditions. After more prodding from MacGregor, I came up with Z, which I said would have C as a result; although this clearly came a lot closer to the conditions I had established for the solution than any of the others I'd suggested, it still did not satisfy all of them. MacGregor then asked me if I could combine any of the approaches I'd suggested. I replied I could do X and Z and then saw that the resultant A plus C would indeed satisfy all the solution conditions I had set up previously. When I thinked MacGregor, he replied, 'What for? Get the hell out of my office; you could have done that bit of problem solving perfectly well without wasting my time. Next time you really can't solve a problem on your own, ask the Thursday man and tell me about it at the Thursday meeting. ".

I asked Johnson about Mr. MacGregor's reference to the Thursday man.

"He's the guy who runs the Thursday meeting when MacGregor is away from the plant. I'm the Thursday man now. My predecessor left here about two months ago.".

"Where did he go? Did he quit the company?" I asked.

"God, no. He got a refinery of his own. That's what happens to a lot of Thursday men. After the kind of experience we get coping with everyone's problems and MacGregor's refusal to do what he perceives as his subordinates' work, we don't need an operating superior any more and we're ready for our own refineries. Incidentally, most of the people at our level have adopted MacGregor's managerial method in dealing with the foremen who report to us and we are reaping the same kinds of benefits that he does. The foremen are a lot more self-reliant, and we don't have to do their work for them.".

I went back to see MacGregor. His secretary was still knitting. The garment she was working on was considerably more advanced than it was on my first visit. She motions me into MacGregor's office with her head, again not dropping a stitch. MacGregor was in his traditional office posture, looking vacantly out of the window. He turned and asked, "Well, now do you believe that I don't make any decision?".

I said, "No, that could have been just a fluke." He suggested I see another subordinate and asked me to pick another name from the list. I picked Peterson who, when phoned to see whether he was available, said that he had nothing to do. So I went to Peterson's office.

Peterson was in his late twenties. He asked me what I thought of MacGregor. I said I found him most unusual. Peterson replied, "Yes, he's a gas." Peterson's story paralleled Johnson's. MacGregor refused to make decisions related to the work of his subordinates. When Peterson got into a situation he could not deal with, he said he called one of the other supervisors, usually Johnson, and together they worked it out. At the Thursday meetings, he reported on the decision and gave credit to his helper. "If I hadn't," he added, "I probably wouldn't get help from that quarter again.".

In reply to a query on what the Thursday meetings were like, he said, 'Well, we all sit around that big conference table in MacGregor's office. He sits at the head like a thinned-down Buddha, and we go around the table talking about the decisions we've made and, if we got help, who helped us. The other guys occasionally make comments--especially if the particular decision being discussed was like one they had had to make themselves at some point or if it had some direct effect on their own operations." MacGregor had said very little at these past few meetings, according to Peterson, but he did pass on any new developments that he heard about at the head office.

HEAD-OFFICE ASSESSMENT OF MACGREGORBy the time I had finished with Johnson and Peterson, it was time for lunch. I decided I'd go downtown and stop in at the head office to try to find out their assessment of MacGregor and his operation. I visited the operations chief for the corporation. I had wanted to thank him for his willingness to go along with my study, anyway. When I told him I had met MacGregor, his immediate response was, "Isn't he a gas?" I muttered something about having heard that comment before and asked him about the efficiency of MacGregor's operation in comparison with that of other refineries in the corporation. His response was instantaneous, "Oh, MacGregor has by far the most efficient producing unit.".

"Is that because he has the newest equipment?" I asked.

"No. As a matter of fact he has the oldest in the corporation. His was the first refinery we built.".

"Does MacGregor have a lot of turnover among his subordinates?".

"A great deal," he replied.

Thinking I had found a chink in the MacGregor armor, I asked, "What happens to them; can't they take his system?".

"On the contrary," said the operations chief. "Most of them go on to assignments as refinery managers. After all, under MacGregor's method of supervision, they are used to working on their own.".

MORE POINTERS ON MACGREGOR'S STYLE OF MANAGING"How do they run their own operations--like MacGregor's?" I asked.

"You guessed it. More and more of our operations are using his system.".

I went back to the refinery with a few last questions for MacGregor. His secretary had made considerable progress on her knitting and her boss had resumed his position by the refinery window.

"I understand you were downtown. What did they tell you about this place?".

"You know damn well what they said--that you have the most efficient operation in the corporation.".

"Yup, it's true," he replied, with no pretense at false modesty. "Periodically, I get chances to go to work for another major oil company--but I've gotten things so well organized here that I really don't want to take on a job like the one I faced when I came here five years ago. I guess I'll hang on here until something better comes up.".

"Let me ask you a couple of questions about the Thursday meeting," I continued. "First of all, I understand that when you are away, the 'Thursday man takes over. How do you choose the individual to fill this slot?".

"Oh, that's simple. I just pick the man who is most often referred to as the one my subordinates turn to for help in dealing with their problems. Then I try him out in this assignment while I'm off. It's good training and, if he proves he can handle it, I know I have someone to propose for any vacancies that may occur at the refinery manager level. The head-office people always contact me for candidates. As a matter of fact, the Thursdayman assignment is sought after. My subordinates compete with each other in helping anyone with a problem because they know they'll get credit for their help at the Thursday meeting. You know, another development has been that jobs on the staff of this refinery are highly prized by young people who want to get ahead in the corporation; when junior management positions open up here, there are always so many candidates that I often have a tough time making a choice.".

"Sounds logical," I said. "Now let me focus a bit more on your role as refinery manager. You say you don't make decisions. Suppose a subordinate told you at a Thursday meeting about a decision he'd made and you were convinced that it was a mistake. What would you do about it?".

"How much would the mistake cost me?".

"Oh, I don't know," I answered.

"Can't tell you, then. It would depend on how much it would cost.".

"Say, $3,000," I suggested.

"That's easy; I'd let him make it," said MacGregor. I sensed I'd hit the upper limit before MacGregor either would have moved in himself or, more likely, would have suggested that the subordinate discuss it with the Thursday man and then report back to him on their joint decision.

"When was the last time you let a subordinate make a mistake of that magnitude?" I asked skeptically.

"About four weeks ago," said MacGregor.

"You let someone who works for you make such a serious mistake? Why did you do that?".

"Three reasons," said MacGregor. "First, I was only 99.44 percent sure it would be a mistake and if it hadn't turned out to be one, I'd have felt pretty foolish. Second, I thought that making a mistake like this one would be such a tremendous learning experience for him that he'd never make another like that one again. I felt it would do him more good than signing him up for most of the management-development courses that are available. Third, this is a profit center. It was early in the budget year and I felt that we could afford it.".

"What was the result?" I asked.

"It was a mistake--and I heard about it in short order from the controller downtown by phone." (I realized suddenly that during the whole time I had been in the office, neither MacGregor's phone nor his secretary's had rung.).

"The controller said, 'MacGregor, how could you let a stupid mistake like that last one slip through? ".

"What did you say?".

"Well, I figured a good attack is the best defense. I asked him which refinery in the corporation was the most efficient. He replied, 'You know yours is. That has nothing to do with it. I told him that it had everything to do with it. I added that my people learn from their mistakes and until the rest of the plants in the organization started operating at the same degree of efficiency as this one, I wasn't going to waste my time talking to clerks. Then I hung up.".

"What happened?".

"Well, relations were a bit strained for a while--but they know I'm probably the best refinery manager in the business and I can get another job anytime, so it blew over pretty quickly," he said, not without a degree of self-satisfaction.

MACGREGOR'S CONTROL SYSTEMS"Peterson told me you have quite a control system here. How does it work?" I asked.

"Very simply," said MacGregor. "On Wednesdays at 2:00 p.m., my subordinates and I get the printout from the computer, which shows the production men their output against quota and the maintenance superintendent his costs to date against the budget. If there is an unfavorable gap between the two, they call me about 3:00 p.m. and the conversation goes something like this: "Mr. MacGregor, I know I have a problem and this is what I'm going to do about it." If their solution will work, I tell them to go ahead. If not, I tell them so and then they go and work on it some more and then call back. If the new one will work, I tell them to go ahead with it. If not, I suggest they get in touch with one of the other men, work it out together, and then call me and tell me how they are going to deal with it. If that doesn't work, I refer them to the Thursday man. That way, I don't get involved in making operating decisions.

"I used to have a smaller refinery than this one where I found myself frantically busy all the time--answering the phone constantly and continually doing my subordinates' problem solving for them. They were always more than willing to let me do their work because it was easier than doing it themselves and also because, if the solution did not work out, then I was to blame. Can't fault them for trying that. But when I came here, I resolved to get myself out of that kind of rat race and set about designing this system. I worked out a computer-based production control system in conjunction with a set of quotas I negotiate each year with each of my operating people and a cost budget with the maintenance man. Then I arranged for Wednesday reports. Sometimes it takes a bit of time to renegotiate these quotas--and I've been known to use peer pressure to get them to a reasonable level--but these performance objectives really have to be accepted by the individual before they have any legitimacy or motivational value for him. I chose Wednesday because if a problem did develop, I'd still have time to act on my own if my subordinates couldn't come up with a solution. You see, our production week ends Saturday night. I don't want my head to fall in the basket because of their inability to make good decisions, so I minimized the risk this way.

"I can't even remember when I've had to get directly involved myself with their work. I do a lot of reading related to my work. That's why, when they call me with solutions, I can usually tell accurately whether or not their proposals are going to work out. That's my job as I see it--not doing subordinates' work but, rather, exercising supervision. A lot of managers feel that they have to keep proving to their people that they know more about their subordinates' jobs than the subordinates themselves by doing their work for them. I refuse to do that anymore.".

"Is there anything else you do?" I asked.

"Well, I look after community relations. One more thing--I work on these." He stepped over to the engineer's file cabinet in the corner of his office. "In here are manning and equipment tables for this plant at five levels of production--at one-year, two-year, five-year, and ten-year intervals. If I get a phone call from the head office and they ask me what it would take to increase production by 20 percent, I ask over what period; if they say, for example, five years, I just read off the equipment and the personnel that would be needed. That's what I see as being an upper level manager's job. As I recall, Peter Drucker once said that managers get paid for the futurity and irreversibility of the decisions they make. Well, these sort of decisions are way in the future and are terribly difficult and expensive to reverse once they are embarked on. Too many managers say they have no time to plan--yet that's what they are being paid to do, not to do their subordinates' work. Not me. I plan, listen to Wednesday reports and Thursday decisions, and play golf.".

"Do your subordinates help you make these planning decisions?" I asked.

"No," said MacGregor. "They gather some of the information and I show them how I go about making up the plans. They all know how to do it after they've been here a couple of years. The actual decisions, though, are made by me. If they are wrong, I have to take the blame--and if they are right," he said with a smile, "I take the credit. Now, I have a most important golf game scheduled. If you have any further questions, just come in any time except Thursday between 10:00 a.m. and noon. I don't have much to do except to talk to visitors.".

As I drove back home, I started to think about the MacGregor approach to management. Did MacGregor use job enrichment? Yes, his men were motivated by their jobs themselves. Did MacGregor train his subordinates? Evidently, because they seem to be constantly in line for promotion. And there was certainly no doubt about the efficiency of his operation. No question about it: MacGregor was a well-organized manager who still had enough time to work on his golf game.

MACGREGOR EPILOGUEIt is clear that MacGregor had several things going for him that helped make his system effective. Not the least of these was that he had very precise measures of the output of each of his subordinates--barrels of product or performance against budget. It is also true that he was in charge of a profit center and that his own performance was appraised over a time span sufficiently long for him to offset short-term diminished performance with long-term results. Further, MacGregor's responsibilities were confined to production; he did not have to contend with marketing problems. His job was merely to deliver a line of products in the quantities called for at minimum cost, by means of production processes that had been well established and understood by those in charge of them. Certainly all these factors helped MacGregor run his operation the way he did and there is no doubt that as his reputation became established, his superiors gave him a freer hand. But to explain MacGregor in terms of a fit between his leadership style and the nature of his responsibilities is to deny what he tells us about how the really effective manager performs his functions.

MacGregor's overriding concern was with results: the results his subordinates achieved through methods they developed either by themselves or by working with their peers. He simply refused to do their work for them, even at the risk of incurring short-run costs. By refusing, he enabled them to grow in terms of their ability to make decisions even under conditions of uncertainty. MacGregor's contact with his subordinates centered on the negotiation of performance standards and the receipt of progress reports on the results they were achieving. When their performance fell short of these standards, he saw his role as one of reminding them that they had a problem and he was interested in hearing how they were going to deal with it. If they could not solve it themselves (and he was confident that he was technically able to assess the likelihood that their solution would be successful), he referred them to one of their peers. He would not permit them to become dependent on him as the ultimate problem solver--ever ready to prove his technical proficiency and perfectly willing to be Big Daddy to subordinates in distress. For MacGregor, each problem encountered by his subordinates represented a self-teaching opportunity. He recognized that he was ultimately responsible for finding the right answer to the problem, but not for formulating its solution, and that for him to become involved in his subordinates' responsibilities was to assume part of the burden that was appropriately their own. Perhaps even more important, doing so would be to deny them the chance to develop their own problem-solving abilities. This refusal to involve himself in their activities afforded him the opportunity to fulfill the planning obligations inherent in higher level management assignments.

Essential to MacGregor's system of management was a team of subordinates highly committed to their job objectives. This commitment was achieved by negotiation of the specific results each was to accomplish, and these negotiations continued until both sides were satisfied that they were realistic and attainable. When a subordinate suggested unrealistic objectives, on either the low or the high side, they were modified through open discussion with a willingness on both sides to adjust previously held positions. In all cases, MacGregor left specifics on how agreed-upon results were to be achieved to the subordinates themselves. By insisting that he be informed on how decisions were actually made, including who helped in the process, MacGregor not only ensured that his subordinates helped each other, but also received the information that he needed to make valid judgments on how well each of them was developing in his job.

Because of the record his subordinates achieved in receiving promotions to the position of refinery manager, MacGregor had no trouble attracting highly capable candidates for managerial jobs in his refinery. Once on his staff, managers recognized that the way to become a Thursday man was through a combination of high performance and an ability to work with peers in a way that enabled them to solve their own problems and reach their own objectives.

UNIQUENESS OF MACGREGORMacGregor was unique among the managers I interviewed in the course of my study. Presumably his approach was a distinct possibility for each of the nine refinery managers I talked to, and certainly with adaptions it could have been used by many of the 100 executives I interviewed--but it wasn't. He had taken management by objectives to its logical limits by concentrating his efforts on formulating and negotiating objectives and had divorced himself from direct involvement in solving problems his subordinates came upon in carrying out their responsibilities.

MacGregor's frequency of regularly scheduled meetings with his subordinates was typical of the managers interviewed in the study: 10 percent met less frequently and about 5 percent more often. But his focus on discussion of complete decisions was unique. Slightly less than three-quarters of the executives with whom I talked saw the purpose of their meetings as a combination of information communication and problem solving; the balance was split evenly between a primary focus on communication of information and a primary emphasis on problem solving. Interestingly, the majority of those who emphasized problem solving were refinery executives.

When describing the degree of reliance they placed on the contributions made by subordinates in the determination of final decisions, half of the managers felt that it was considerable, a quarter that it was heavy, and the balance that it was either not too significant or that it varied with the individuals involved. Only MacGregor left the actual decision making (except in rare circumstances) to the subordinates themselves.

All the managers, except MacGregor, either stated explicitly or made it clear during the course of the interviews that all important decisions arrived at in these meetings were made by themselves. They received suggestions, considered their sources, and either compared the proffered solutions with solutions they had developed on their own, or considered them carefully before reaching a final solution. In using this approach to group decision making, the managers were obviously manifesting their deeply held convictions that one of the key responsibilities of an upper level executive is to act as chief decision maker for those who report to him. They believed that, after all, the superior is ultimately responsible for the quality of the decisions made in his organization and the only way to carry out this task is to become directly involved in the decision-making process itself.

Most of the managers I have encountered--both organizational superiors and outside managers involved in the studies I've conducted or the consulting assignments I've carried out--pride themselves on the extent to which they invite their subordinates to participate in organizational decision making, but their perceptions of this process and its organizational impact often differ sharply from those of the subordinates involved. For many of the latter, the participative management routine is just that--a routine acted out by the boss because it evidences his espousal of a technique that is supposed to increase the likelihood that subordinates will accept and commit themselves to decisions; he may even believe the decisions were jointly determined. However, most participative management is, in fact, a fiction. Under these conditions, participative management is seen by lower level participants as, at worst, a manipulative device and, at best, an opportunity for them to avoid decision-making responsibility and assure that if a wrong solution is reached, the boss himself was a party to the decision.

MacGregor avoided this trap by refusing to give managers reporting to him the opportunity to second-guess the solution he would be most likely to choose. Although he allowed himself some margin in case emergency action on his part should become inevitable, he made it clear that he wanted to hear about problems only after they had been solved and about decisions only after they had been made.

PERSPECTIVE ON MACGREGOR'S USE OF TIMEIt is interesting to compare MacGregor's use of time, which perhaps better than any other index shows his priorities, with the findings reported by management researchers who have conducted detailed quantitative studies of the way managers perform their jobs. In two articles-- "A New Look at the Chief Executive's Job," Organizational Dynamics (Winter 1973, pp. 20-30) and "The Manager's Job: Folklore and Fact," Harvard Business Review (July-August 1975, pp. 49-61)--Henry Mintzberg cites the work of Rosemary Stewart, Leonard Sayles, Robert Guest, and others on the work characteristics of managers and then develops ten roles of the chief executive, which he divides into three groupings: interpersonal, informational, and decisional. Under the interpersonal classification, Mintzberg includes such roles as figurehead, leader, and liaison; under informational, monitor, disseminator, and spokesman; and under decisional, entrepreneur (seeking to improve his unit and adapt it to changing conditions in the environment), disturbance handler, resource allocator, and negotiator.

The job of refinery manager falls between that of chief executive (responsibility for all aspects of the operation and profit accountability) and that of production manager (only indirect concern for the integration of such functions as finance, accounting, marketing, and so on). Mintzberg points out that production managers give greatest attention to decisional roles, especially those of disturbance handler and negotiator. MacGregor, by contrast, minimized his role as disturbance handler but did put a lot of time, energy, and effort into negotiating objectives with his subordinates, rather than laying them on his people and then selling them on the reasonableness of his decisions. He also worked constantly to improve his unit, to adapt it to changing environmental conditions, and to allocate present and potential organizational resources for optimal present and future effectiveness. In his interpersonal role MacGregor was readily available for figurehead and liaison activities, and his program for subordinate self-development attracted enough attention within the corporation to ensure a supply of highly motivated subordinates.

In his informational role, MacGregor monitored the output of the management information system he had devised, but he did so after the same information had been reviewed by his subordinates. The dissemination function was partly achieved by the management information system and partly through the joint review of managerial decisions conducted at the Thursday morning meetings. As spokesman for his unit, he was easily accessible to individuals inside and outside the corporation.

What sets MacGregor apart from other managers is that he had consciously thought out his role as an upper level administrator. He did not blindly adopt the methods of his predecessor; neither did he merely adapt a modus operandi he had previously found reasonably successful to the greater demands of running a larger unit. Rather, MacGregor reflected on what the key responsibilities of the executive in charge of a large operating facility really are and concluded that they involve being well informed on changes occurring in the environment that might have an impact on his operation and determining how best to adjust operations to benefit from these changes. At the same time, MacGregor recognized that profitable operations must be carried out in the here-and-now and that a supply of qualified subordinates must be developed for the future.

He concluded that his time was the scarce commodity and he threw himself into the design and implementation of a managerial system that had as its hallmarks self-development for his subordinates, an efficient operation for his employer, and time for himself to actively consider the impact of future developments on his unit. His wise investment of that scarce commodity, his own time, in designing an effective management system paid an extra dividend--surplus time for recreational pursuits.

Added material.

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SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHYGeorge S. Odiorne's Management and the Activity Trap (Harper & Row, 1974) emphasizes how easy it is for managers to become so engrossed in the execution of their activities that they lose sight of the objectives toward which they should be directing their own efforts and those of their subordinates. This book follows the same author's Management by Objectives: A System of Managerial Leadership (Pitman, 1965) and stresses two often neglected aspects of the role of the manager--getting commitment from subordinates and developing their capabilities.

Peter F. Drucker, in The Effective Executive (Harper & Row, 1966), stresses careful use of time, an orientation toward results rather than work, development of subordinates, establishment of priorities, and decision making. His classic The Practice of Management (Harper & Row, 1954) and his more recent Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices (Harper & Row, 1973) express thoughtful reflection on the nature of the manager's job.

In Management of Organizational Behavior (Prentice-Hall, 1972), Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard develop a "life-cycle theory of leadership" in which they point out that groups with different levels of maturity require different kinds of leadership, and that as they develop, the nature and amount of time they need from their superiors change.

A succinct summary of leadership theory is found in T.O. Jacob's Leadership and Exchange in Formal Organizations (Human Resources Research Organization, 1970). Thoroughly readable, it offers a historical perspective, a summary of contemporary views of leadership, and a review of the transactional approach, motivation theory, and group behavior and leadership in organizations.

Henry Mintzberg's book The Nature of Managerial Work (Harper & Row, 1973) and the two articles cited earlier show the results of a carefully conducted study of how managers actually carry out their organizational responsibilities. They are valuable reading for the business executive who occasionally wonders about how this allocation of time compares with that of other people in similar positions.

A study of the opinions of 318 managers regarding participative leadership is reported in Larry E. Greiner's article, "What Managers Think About Participative Leadership" (Harvard Business Review, March-April 1973), and indicates general agreement that this style tends to produce effective results, but notes that the age of the manager may influence his leadership orientation.

An interview with John deButts, as Chairman of AT&T (Harvard Business Review, January-February 1974), shows his view of organizational decision making and time management. It is informative and thought provoking.

Finally, William Oncken, Jr. and Donald L. Wass's article, "Management Time: Who's Got the Monkey?" (Harvard Business Review, November-December 1974), provides an amusing yet insightful depiction of the time bind faced by executives.