PERSONNEL PROBLEMS IN FOREMANKSHIP: CASE STUDIES

APPROVED:

C. L. Letterfield
Major Professor

Floyd E. Johnson
Minor Professor

O. F. Carey
Dean of the School of Business Administration

Robert B. Toulouze
Dean of the Graduate School
PERSONNEL PROBLEMS IN FOREMANSHIP: CASE STUDIES

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Troy P. Miller, Jr., B. B. A.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The foreman's position is a central one in a business organization for two basic reasons. First, the employee's primary contact with management is through the foreman. The foreman is a constant reminder of management. Second, management's contact with the employee is primarily through the foreman. As Dubin says, "The office of foreman is a central link in a chain of command. In this office, there is a 'built-in' and institutionalized need to be Janus-faced—to be able to look in two directions at the same time."1

Since the foreman has occupied such a central or pivotal position in the management organization, the decisions he has made and his daily relationships with all members of the organization have played a vital role in the success of the business organization. Many of the decisions and relationships are not readily and immediately subject to evaluation. In some instances, the decisions and relationships can never be subject to direct evaluation, as the results are completely buried and not apparent to anyone,

even the people directly concerned. For instance, how can the effect of a raised eyebrow be evaluated? Yet this act could be misinterpreted as criticism or disbelief and, indirectly, could be the cause of the abandonment or modification of a sound decision or project.²

Some decisions of the foreman can be more easily evaluated. Such things as quality, quantity, and cost can be reduced to finite quantities or percentages; but, even in these instances, the evaluation cannot be all-inclusive. No one has developed a method of trying various courses, retracing time, and using only the course or method that proves best. At any given time, all the foreman can do is to decide on the course which seems preferable and then implement the decision. If the decision proves faulty, his only remaining course is to attempt to reorganize his thoughts, repair the damage as best he can, and move to the next development. Of course, the wise foreman will draw on past experience in arriving at a decision, but seldom will any two situations be exactly the same in every detail, especially in the field of human relations and evaluation of individuals.³

The importance of the role which the foreman plays becomes more apparent when a definition of the foreman's job is considered. A foreman's primary responsibility is to

²Ibid., pp. 141-149.
³Ibid.
make things happen through the efforts of his subordinates. The worker is generally held to be responsible for things, while the supervisor or foreman is primarily responsible for people.\(^4\)

In the foreman's primary responsibility for people, it becomes apparent that the human relations aspect of his position is quite important. The foreman must secure the cooperation of his people to accomplish his job. He cannot secure the necessary cooperation without considering the wants and needs of his employees. Each worker is different, and so the foreman must consider each worker in the light of these differences. The foreman must have, among many things, a tolerant attitude toward ideas and philosophies that differ from his own, though he is not required to accept all ideas and philosophies. Above all, a foreman must be fair and impartial and act on a sound and consistent basis. Further, he must earn the respect of his people. Respect cannot be delegated or assigned as can a job title and position.

A foreman's job is only half complete when he has completed the task of securing the maximum effort of his people. The foreman then must evaluate the degree of success of his workers in the performance of their respective job assignments. The evaluation may be formalized into a merit review.

or job performance review program administered by the organization. On the other hand, it may be an informal evaluation by the foreman to be sure that each worker is carrying his fair share of the work load. The potential results are wage increases, promotions, demotions, or transfers in both the formal and informal methods of evaluation. More likely, the informal evaluation will be for the purpose of informing the worker how he is progressing on a daily or weekly basis. The informal evaluation is also frequently used between periods of formal evaluation. Without evaluating the efforts of his workers, the foreman would not know to what degree he had been successful in securing the performance capabilities of the workers as a group.

Evaluation of his employees is not the only evaluation the foreman must accomplish. He must continually and thoroughly evaluate his own performance as a supervisor both in relation to his employees and in relation to his management responsibilities. His every word, facial expression, indeed every action, must be constantly evaluated as are his over-all or general accomplishments. A thoughtless word or act may nullify weeks or even months of careful supervisory effort.

The evaluation of his own efforts as a foreman takes on a new aspect when the foreman or potential foreman considers the many thousands of possible human relations situations that could exist. The meeting of one situation in a general
category does not necessarily qualify the foreman for all possible actual situations that fit in the same general category. However, the foreman may be able to further qualify himself through the experiences of other foremen and careful evaluation of the situations encountered by the other foremen. The wise foreman, then, constantly learns from his own experiences and from the experiences of others.

Statement of the Problem

The question arises as to how the potential and beginning foreman can gain insight into the human relations problems he will encounter. The insight may be gained through formal course study of principles, role playing, conference discussions, and case analysis in colleges and universities and in industry. From the vast number of books and articles that have been published, the principles appear to be well covered. From the study of principles, the potential and beginning foreman quickly realizes that the actual situations he may encounter are numerous. The more actual case situations the potential and beginning foreman can study and analyze, the better insight he can gain into his chosen field of endeavor. It appears, then, that the need for case material

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5 Hubert Clay and Lief Olsen, "Internships in the Development of People," Personnel Journal, XL (June, 1961), 58-65. In their article Clay and Olsen recommend that case studies are a method of gaining good vicarious experience, particularly when the cases are studied with the assistance of a well-experienced instructor.
for study in colleges and universities and in industry is almost unlimited. Unfortunately, existence of written material containing cases for analysis is limited (to the extent that the prospective or fledgling foreman may not realize that certain situations could possibly arise until he encounters them while on the job).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to supply additional case material for analysis and study by the potential and beginning foreman. Since it would be impossible to cover all possible situations, only selected cases are presented. The selected cases illustrate problems in foreman-to-employee relationships, foreman-to-foreman and staff-groups relationships, and foreman-to-superior relationships. In the interest of clarity, each case was analyzed as to key points covered or contained, principles illustrated by the case, and recommendations derived from the analysis.

In addition to supplying further case material, the study was intended to single out some especially troublesome areas of supervision as encountered by one practicing foreman. These main areas were counseling associated with merit review, the informal organization, communications, and delegation of authority and responsibility.
Method of Investigation and Sources of Data

The first step in this study was to select a general problem area in the foreman's relationships within an organization. One or more case studies illustrating this general problem were selected and classified as to specific key points. An analysis was then made of secondary sources and principles that appeared to apply to the specific case problem. Additional recommendations on the action taken in the cases were based on analysis of both the case situation and the principles.

The data for this study were taken from both primary and secondary sources. The primary data were taken from the experiences of a practicing foreman. The names of the persons used in the cases are fictitious and the name of the company involved was held to be confidential; further, the actual names of the people and the company were not considered to be of any importance to the presentation of the material. The secondary data included books and current periodicals such as Human Relations in Administration and Personnel Journal.

Definition of Terms

The terms foreman and supervisor as used in this study refer to the first echelon supervisor, or the lowest level of management responsibility. Section foreman refers to the second level supervisor or the supervisor of the foreman.
The term manager refers to the third echelon of management responsibility. Employee and worker are terms which are used interchangeably and designate those persons without management responsibilities. No other terms which are used have special significance beyond the common definitions.

Order of Presentation

The first chapter includes the introduction, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, methods of investigation, sources of data, and definition of terms.

The second chapter presents the foreman-to-employee relationship in the general areas of communications, informal organization, employee counseling, and methods of supervision.

The third chapter covers the area of foreman-to-superior relationships. The main areas covered are delegation of authority and recognition of contributions.

The fourth chapter deals with the foreman-to-foreman and staff-groups relationships. The general areas covered in this section are cooperation and communications.

The final chapter contains the summary, conclusions, and recommendations derived from the preceding chapters.
Dubin explains that the employee's primary contact with management is through the foreman. Through the foreman, the employee develops his ideas of management.\(^1\)

The foreman should always try to maintain a balance between his employees and management. One cannot be allowed to benefit at the expense of the other. Spriegel suggests six practices that will aid the foreman in staying on the middle path. These practices are: "... (1) avoiding prejudices and striving to develop a judicial attitude in all matters where there is a conflict in interest, (2) continuously studying his men, (3) knowing the company policies, (4) encouraging good will by manifesting it himself, (5) leading in teamwork, and (6) practicing loyalty."\(^2\)

At times, the balance between employee obligations and management obligations is virtually impossible to maintain. Both foreman and employee are told many times to conform to

\(^{1}\)Robert Dubin, editor, Human Relations in Administration (New York, 1951), p. 139.

certain conditions over which they have little or no say. These conditions sometimes fail to take into account what is of vital importance to them in their work situation. This situation makes the foreman's relations with his workers extremely difficult. The foreman is put in a position of being loyal to the company and incurring the resentment and opposition of his employees, or of being loyal to his employees and disloyal to the company. This dual relationship of the foreman in (1) representing the company to the employees and (2) representing the employees to the company cannot be overemphasized.

In this dual relationship the foreman must keep management informed of the difficulties his employees encounter and the feelings of the employees. Without these points of information, management does not have all the information necessary to make sound decisions. Also, the foreman's own personal success is determined by his success in securing the best performance of his employees in attaining the work objectives.

To be certain that the objectives are attained, the employees' progress must be evaluated and the evaluation discussed with the employee. One of the greatest values of the employee rating program is its use as a tool in employee

3Dubin, op. cit., p. 145.
4Spriegel, op. cit., p. 42. 5Ibid.
counseling. The decision not to discuss the ratings with the employee may be based on the feeling that the discussion may lead to needless controversy and recrimination. Most companies discuss the ratings with the individual rated. This policy is based on the principle that interchange of information between foreman and employee is the best way of uncovering and removing sources of irritation.\(^6\)

If grievances exist or if employees have shortcomings, they will not be reduced by the passage of time. The matter eventually must be discussed. The best time to discuss the individual's rating is shortly after the rating. The employee has more time to correct his shortcomings before the next rating and the reasons for the rating are still fresh in the rater's mind.\(^7\)

The foreman's job in relation to his employees subdivides into four major areas: (1) communications, (2) supervisory techniques, (3) discipline, and (4) counseling. One or more cases is presented in each of these areas, beginning with communications.

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\(^7\)Ibid.
Communications: Rumor

Narrative of the Situation: Case 1

Three operators were engaged in a chemical cleaning process. The operation consisted of directing a stream of mixed chemicals on a specific point on a small part. The amount of time the part was in the chemical was predetermined. The operators timed the operation by means of an electronic beep each second. The job required good manual dexterity and close attention to routine detail.

Three other operators were engaged in a soldering operation. The operation was somewhat controlled by a chain furnace. The operators dipped one part in liquid solder and placed another part in the correct position in the solder. The two parts were then passed through the furnace, washed, and stored, awaiting further processing. The requirements for this operation were the same as for the chemical cleaning operators.

A rumor was started among the chemical cleaning operators and the soldering operators to the effect that the foreman had stated that trained monkeys could do as well as the operators.

Several days elapsed before one of the chemical cleaning operators consulted the foreman. When confronted with the rumor, the foreman was shocked and explained at length that the rumor and its content were wrong.
Although the foreman could not remember making such a statement or implying such a thought, he apologized to the operators. The foreman also discussed the rumor with the other chemical cleaning operators and soldering operators. All of the operators seemed relieved that the foreman made no such statement. Most stated that they had not believed the rumor but had wondered if it were true. Morale was apparently restored, and no further comments were heard by the foreman about the rumor.

**Key Points**

In this case, a false rumor caused considerable anxiety among six operators. In the minds of these operators, they had lost much of their job security, their job importance, and their sense of being valued and respected employees.

**Principles**

Rumors should be struck down firmly and consistently; however, the foreman should know how and what to strike. The grapevine that carries the rumor should not be impugned; only the rumor itself should be attacked.  

The best way to strike back at a rumor is to determine its causes and correct them. If rumors are started and do

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persist, the foreman should first ascertain the truth of the rumor. In the case of a false rumor, it should be answered correctly, decisively, and as quickly as possible.9

**Recommendations**

The foreman should keep his employees well-informed at all times. They should be advised not only of formal information such as company policies, but also informal information such as the foreman's own standards, ideas, opinions, and philosophies which affect the employee directly, in order to avoid future misunderstandings.

**Communications: Promotion Criteria**

**Narrative of the Situation: Case 2**

Carl was a line foreman in charge of twenty workers. The line produced small electronic subassemblies. Carl had advanced to foreman from assistant foreman one year previously and had no previous experience as a supervisor. His job title was "working foreman," and he was paid on an hourly basis. The company policy was to promote the working foreman to group foreman, a salaried position based on merit and, to some extent, on hourly rate level.

The standard joke in the plant was that the working or hourly paid foreman was promoted to salary level when his

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9Spriegel, op. cit., p. 44.
gross earnings exceeded the section foreman's gross earnings. Carl took the joke seriously and thought base rate alone determined the job level.

At the last merit review in December, Carl had received a very good increase in pay and an excellent rating. However, during the following six-months period his work had not improved. On some points his performance had declined. Several serious errors in judgment were made in the same basic situations. All situations concerned the decision to scrap or rescreen rejected material. On the three occasions in question, Carl lost his temper and scrapped entire lots when the material again failed inspection after rescreening. The second shift foreman had gone through these scrapped lots and recovered approximately 70 per cent of the material. The recovered material passed inspection. Carl had been counseled after each incident.

At the second merit review in June, the ratings were discussed with Carl and the seriousness of the bad judgments was re-emphasized. He was not happy with the review but admitted it was correct. Carl was then told he would remain on an hourly basis even though his hourly rate was at the level where most working foremen were promoted to salaried foremen. He was quite upset.

Carl stated that he could not understand why he had not been promoted. The ratings were again explained and discussed,
but to no avail. The section foreman then asked Carl to think the matter through and the two of them would discuss the review again the next morning.

After the next discussion, Carl was still dissatisfied and asked permission to talk with the section foreman's superior, the branch manager. Permission was granted and an appointment made for Carl by the section foreman. Prior to the review, the branch manager was fully informed of the ratings, the proposed actions of the section foreman, and the proceedings of the two discussions of the ratings.

Carl and the branch manager discussed the ratings and the lack of promotion at length. The section foreman was then called in and informed of the discussion. Carl had decided that the proceedings had been justified and, although he was not happy, he accepted the situation. He stated that he would improve the low points and earn the promotion to salaried level.

During the following merit review (six months later) Carl was promoted to salary. His work performance and judgment in making decisions had improved markedly.

**Key Points**

Carl had not received the correct information as to the criteria for promotion and, consequently, was expecting a promotion based on the qualifications which he believed to be important.
Principles

The employees naturally look to the foreman for directions. They also expect the foreman to provide instruction in policies, work methods, and preparation for promotion to the next higher level. 10

Ratings provide permanent records on a systematic basis for promotion, transfer, demotion, layoff, and discharge. Union contracts sometimes have a clause to the effect that workers will be laid off on the basis of seniority, all other factors being equal. Merit rating measures the other factors. 11

Ratings can be used to help in the determination of regular wages and for bonuses and profit sharing. The ratings can be used to justify a wage increase for an individual when he exceeds the minimum requirements of his job. 12

Recommendations

A foreman should make certain his people are well-informed and correctly informed in matters pertaining to advancement and job security. This is doubly true when the foreman knows that changes in status may occur in the near future for his employees.

10Spriegel, op. cit., p. 47.


12Ibid.
Communications: Informal Organization

Narrative of the Situation: Case 3

The line foreman, Phil, began to notice an apparent lack of cooperation between some of his employees. All of the twenty-one employees on the line had worked together for approximately six months.

The situation did not appear to be serious, but Phil decided to observe it closely. During the next three weeks no problems appeared. All employees seemed to be happy and at ease with each other.

The situation then began to deteriorate rapidly. The line divided into three groups. One group centered around Jane, while the second group looked to Ann for leadership. The third group tried to stay out of any conflict between the two groups. The quantity and quality of work did not appear to suffer; however, Phil felt it would be only a matter of time until quality or quantity, or both, suffered.

The exact leaders of the two rival groups were not clearly identifiable from the onset. Phil, therefore, waited for approximately two weeks to take action. When the identity of the leaders became apparent, Phil talked to both Jane and Ann separately and privately.

The separate talks developed the cause for the two groups. Jane and Ann had a violent personality clash. Over a period of approximately six months, each had been collecting
support in an attempt to control the line. Whatever Jane wanted, Ann automatically opposed.

Phil called Jane and Ann into a joint conference. He explained what he had noticed and asked their support in restoring the spirit of cooperation to the line. Phil further mentioned the personality difference existing between Jane and Ann and asked them if they could solve their problems privately and not involve the remainder of the line employees. Both agreed to do their best in correcting a bad situation.

The conflict rapidly disappeared during the following days with complete relief coming when Ann asked for a transfer. The transfer to a higher job level, a definite promotion for her, was approved. The remaining employees rapidly reassembled into one group, and no further serious splits developed in their relationships.

Key Points

Jane and Ann each desired to be the informal leader of the line. The result was a clash between them. Although the quality and quantity of the line product had not been affected, the foreman felt that a decline was inevitable.

Principles

The informal organization cannot be averted since it is a spontaneous phenomenon. As a result, management and the foreman must recognize and acknowledge that such a group
does exist. When foremen make changes in work situations without recognizing that such informal groups exist, the groups may feel ignored or persecuted. The tendency may develop for some of the groups to push in the opposite direction, which often results in failure of good management or good foreman ideas. To the foreman, personally, it may mean that he is predestined to failure without knowing the reason for failure.\(^{13}\)

Further conflict develops due to two sets of social processes within the organization. The first of these is the process which is directly related to the achievement of the purpose of the organization and which results in the formal organization. This formal organization is concerned with the most appropriate means to achieve specific ends and can be changed rapidly. The second set of processes is the informal organization. The informal organization is not necessarily logical in character; it is concerned with values, ways of life, and ends in themselves. The informal organization may well be a help rather than a hindrance in that it may provide a setting which makes employees willing to contribute their services.\(^{14}\)

\(^{13}\)Dubin, op. cit., pp. 146-147.
\(^{14}\)Ibid., pp. 145-146.
A tightly knit, cohesive work group, as compared to separate individuals, may be the most effective in achieving the organizational goals.\textsuperscript{15}

**Recommendations**

The foreman should realize that an informal group exists and should use this group to the advantage of the formal organization. Trying to suppress an informal group will only make the foreman's job more difficult. If the informal group is a definite deterrent to the formal organization, then the foreman must determine the leader and sell him the aims of the formal organization.

**Supervision: Improper Standards for Evaluation of Job Performance**

**Narrative of the Situation: Case 4**

Linda had previously worked for the company for a period of three years. Her previous work record had been excellent and she was rehired with no hesitation. On her return to work, she started on a line that was closed out six weeks later. Her foreman was Jim. She was then transferred to another line. The second line used an entirely different manufacturing process.

The second line was supervised by a new foreman, Phil, who had a degree in industrial management but only two months'

experience. All other personnel on the line had two months' experience, or less.

The company had a policy of rating each employee's performance at the end of his first ninety days. The rating was a formal procedure, and the employee either received a wage increase for satisfactory performance or was terminated. The amount of wage increase depended upon the employee's degree of performance. Termination was only for those who proved unsatisfactory.

At the end of Linda's first ninety days, Phil reviewed her performance and completed the review form. Jim was not consulted as to his evaluation of Linda's first six weeks of work.

From Phil's point of view, Linda had not progressed as well as some other employees. He was taking into consideration her previous experience without careful analysis of the qualitative rather than the quantitative aspects of her experience. As a result, a higher standard that was unfair to Linda was used.

A recommendation for the minimum increase was made on the basis of the rating. All necessary approvals were obtained and Linda was interviewed by Phil. When the rating was presented and explained, she made no comments to Phil but appeared unhappy with the rating and the amount of increase.
Jim later talked with Linda and she mentioned the low increase and rating. She also stated her disappointment. Surprised, Jim discussed the matter with the section foreman.

The section foreman was informed of Linda's feelings and Phil's lack of coordination with Jim. A discussion between the section foreman and Phil followed. The section foreman pointed out the errors made and suggested that Phil discuss the matter further with Linda.

Phil had a conference with Linda and pointed out the errors he had made. Although nothing could be done to increase Linda's wage rate, the conference did relieve her worry about her job performance. Irreparable damage had been done to the attitude of Linda toward her work with Phil. Her work performance began to decline to a serious degree. Phil discussed the situation with the section foreman.

As a final result, Linda was transferred to another line with the third foreman fully aware of the situation. Linda was a very good employee for the third foreman, and future ratings and increases were commensurate.

**Key Points**

There appeared to be two main problems, both indicating failure on the foreman's part. First, the foreman failed to take into consideration the difference in the nature of work; second, there was a violation of standard company practice. Had the foreman considered the work difference or consulted
the second foreman about Linda's work, no problem would have developed.

**Principles**

A good foreman is one who has the confidence of his employees and of his own supervisor. The beginning of confidence comes from the foreman's position, but this confidence must be maintained by the foreman through his daily actions. Once the employees lose confidence in their foreman, he can no longer secure their maximum potential. When this occurs, the foreman's superiors will lose confidence in his ability to be a supervisor. 16

Rating people is a skill that is not easily learned. Good production men and good supervisors are not necessarily good raters unless they have been taught how to rate. At best, rating is somewhat subjective. Prejudice and bias can never be completely eliminated and, without training, the rater may allow prejudice and bias to distort his ratings. Companies which have had all raters attend a systematic training program of from six to eight hours before making any ratings have found the time and money spent on this training a good investment for uniform ratings. 17

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16 Spriegel, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

It is a good idea to have the ratings made in conference or under supervision. This encourages the rater to give more careful consideration to each rating rather than making ratings hastily and under pressure of time. Also, any questions that the rater may have can be quickly and accurately clarified. Ratings made under supervision are usually more comparable between units than those made by the rater working alone.18

Recommendations

The recommendations for this case appear quite obvious. The foreman made an appraisal without careful consideration of the employee's past work history. In making an appraisal, the conclusions should come from adequate investigation and careful deliberation.

Supervision: Close Supervision of Employees

Narrative of the Situation: Case 5

Ray was a line foreman in the assembly of miniature electronic parts. He had no previous supervisory experience but had received a degree in industrial engineering the previous month.

Ray's philosophy in supervision was to keep very tight control over his employees. The company policy was to let each foreman decide his own method of handling details as long as the general policies were met. Ray's methods did not clash with company policy.

18Ibid., p. 16.
Ray expected his employees to return promptly from coffee breaks and lunch. Of course, all other foremen expected the same from their employees, but Ray went one step further. He would time each of his employees and then publicly tell each one that was late exactly how many minutes and seconds he was late. Most of the employees resented these tactics.

Company policy allowed employees additional time other than breaks and lunch for personal needs. The only restriction was to be as brief as possible. Ray would time employees who left the line and, if they were gone for more than five minutes, he would call the time to their attention. He also allowed only one person to be absent from the line at any one time.

As a result of Ray's practices, the employees were always prompt and spent very little time away from the line. However, Ray's absentee rate was higher than most other lines. Further, when he was absent from the line and the immediate area, all production virtually ceased. Two or more employees would watch for his return and inform the others when he came into view.

The section foreman noticed the situation and consulted with Ray about what could be done. As a result, Ray tried much tighter controls but with no success. After approximately six months on this job, Ray resigned to accept another position in the industrial engineering field.
Key Points
Ray built his line's discipline on the basis of fear and distrust of the individual rather than by motivating the individuals through praise when deserved, trust in the individual, and installation of a sense of responsibility.

Principles
At one extreme, management can be "hard" or "strong." At the other extreme, management can be "soft" or "weak." The hard approach involves coercion and threat, close supervision, and tight controls over behavior. The soft approach consists of being permissive, satisfying the employee's demands, and achieving harmony. The pitfalls of the hard approach are that force breeds counterforce, which is evidenced by restriction of output, antagonism, militant unionism, and subtle but effective sabotage of management objectives. The major pitfalls of the soft approach are that it leads to indifferent performances by employees who may take advantage of the situation. Also, they continually expect more while giving less and less. The current, popular theme appears to be one of firmness tempered with fairness.19

Recommendations
The best approach to supervision appears to be the firm but fair approach: praise when praise is earned, and punish

19McGregor, op. cit., p. 51.
when punishment is required. Also, it appears that im-
partiality tempered with understanding for the individual
is a part of the firm but fair approach.

Discipline: Absenteeism

Narrative of the Situation: Case 6

Louann was employed as an assembler from February, 1959,
to May, 1960. From February, 1959, until March, 1960, she
worked for Phil (who was promoted in March). The former
assistant foreman, George, was promoted to foreman.

During her first three months, Louann was absent and
tardy more than the average operator. She explained this
lack of promptness and absences as a result of domestic
troubles. She was in the process of obtaining a divorce
from her husband. Phil accepted these reasons as valid with
the expectation of the problem's vanishing when the divorce
proceedings were completed. However, he did explain to
Louann that excessive absenteeism and tardiness were grounds
for disciplinary action.

After the divorce proceedings were completed, Louann's
record continued to be erratic. Phil again discussed the
situation with her. She then explained that the people with
whom she rode to work were the cause of her tardiness, and
that she would make other transportation arrangements. For
the next several weeks, Louann was very prompt and her ab-
sentee rate dropped sharply.
In December, 1959, Louann's record began to deteriorate rapidly. Absences ranged from one day per week to three days per week. She was late approximately 50 per cent of the days she was present for work. As a result, in January, 1960, Phil informed Louann of her record and warned her of disciplinary action if the record did not change.

Louann's record did not improve. As a result, Phil placed her on sixty days' probation, warning that termination would follow unless a perfect attendance record was maintained. Phil also requested that she bring a statement from her doctor anytime she was absent during the probation period because of illness.

During the probation period, Louann's record was excellent. Consequently, Phil recommended that she be returned to regular status as of April, 1960. Also during the probation period, Phil had been promoted to section foreman and George, the former assistant foreman of the line, had taken charge.

After the termination of her probation, Louann was absent for four consecutive weeks. Neither George nor Phil was able to contact Louann or to discover the reason for her absences. As a result, Phil recommended termination. The recommendation was approved effective May, 1960. Louann was never located, and she did not contact the company, Phil, or George. The basic, underlying cause for her absences was never determined.
Key Points
The main problem was one of absenteeism. The cause of the absences appeared to stem from domestic problems, but this was not definitely established.

Principles
The foreman must remember that as a part of management he has an obligation to carry out company policies and interpret these policies and practices to the employees.²⁰

Maier and Danielson found that foremen vary in their implementation of prescribed penalty in cases of policy violation by the employee. In their study they found that 52 per cent of the foremen failed to follow the letter of the law and, instead, reduced or omitted the penalty. The foremen gave varying reasons for not applying the prescribed penalty. Regardless of how the foreman feels about rules, the rules must be followed if they are to accomplish their objective.²¹

Recommendations
The only recommendation in this case would be for the foreman not to wait so long to initiate disciplinary action.

The disciplinary action sequence was as prescribed by company policy.

Counseling: Personal Problems Interfering with Performance

Narrative of the Situation: Case 7

Sally was a widow with three school-age children. She was the sole source of income for herself and the children; consequently, she was compelled to work. Her personal appearance and attitude, however, left much to be desired.

Upon completion of her first ninety days, Sally and her foreman discussed the progress she had made during the elapsed period. Her job performance had been satisfactory, but she needed improvement of attitude and a decrease in the amount of time spent away from her job. She agreed that these points needed improvement and that she would work toward a solution.

At the next formal review six months later, these same points of her attitude and time away from the job were discussed. Reluctantly admitting that there had been no improvement, Sally would make no definite commitment as to a solution.

Several times during the next six-months period, the foreman held informal talks with Sally, pointing out the lack of improvement. The foreman also pressed for a definite commitment as to her intent to improve but received only vague answers in reply.
The situation continually deteriorated. It was brought to the attention of the foreman that Sally was using vile language around other employees. Also, her work performance declined to a serious low. Her personal appearance deteriorated to near-slovenliness. She was bordering on official disciplinary action. However, her foreman decided to give her one last chance. This decision was reached just prior to the second six-months performance review.

The foreman planned the formal interview to be a real shock to Sally. He planned to speak very plainly and harshly of her weak points, with little or no comment on her strong points. This was a complete departure from previous interview methods. The foreman planned to either awaken her to the seriousness of the problem or force her out of the company.

During the interview Sally sat rigid and withdrawn. Obviously, she did not agree with the foreman and was hostile to the idea that she was in error. At the conclusion of the interview the foreman asked Sally if she knew what was to happen next; she replied that she thought so. The foreman then told Sally that she would receive an increase in pay. She was so overwhelmed that she started crying and could not talk. The foreman stepped outside for a few moments to allow Sally to collect herself.

When the foreman re-entered the room, Sally began to talk freely about the interview, stating that she felt the
foreman had been right. She also added some of her weak points which the foreman had not discussed. She also outlined a definite plan for improvement, including a schedule to follow. Thanking the foreman for this second chance, Sally stated that she had expected to be either placed on probation or terminated.

As a result of the interview and following discussions, Sally improved her work performance as well as her personal life. So well did she succeed that at the next six-months review, she received a top rating and a salary increase.

During informal discussions in the following months, Sally began to discuss her personal life, and the actual cause of her previous low performances became clear. After the death of her husband, she had lost all interest in anything or anyone, including herself. As a result of the second review, she had realized her responsibilities and was determined to meet them and to reconcile herself to life as it existed for her.

**Key Points**

Sally appeared to be completely uninterested in her work. She also seemed disinterested in her own appearance and in her relations with other workers.

The foreman was unable to develop Sally's interest in her work through normally sound counseling techniques. Only
after use of a shock approach could a rapport be established from which improvement could be accomplished.

Principles

Most foremen realize the importance of the place they occupy in the employee's work situation, but many fail to recognize the tremendous part they play in the over-all life situation of the employee. The earnings and position of his employees are largely dependent on the foreman and his actions. It is imperative, then, that actions taken in respect to his employees be based on facts; full consideration should be given to the effect on all his employees, as well as the one under consideration.22

As a result of action--pending or already taken--the foreman may find himself in the role of counselor. For a successful counseling interview, the following steps should be followed:

1. Plan the interview. Decide on time and place, get all the facts, and plan the approach to suit the individual.

2. Put the employee at ease. Talk first about his outside interests or about the general idea of the interview.

3. Explain the purpose fully. Each time, be sure to point out the ways in which the rating program will benefit the ratee.

22Spiegel, op. cit., p. 44.
4. Talk about good points first, then cover each point in detail. Avoid starting out on a weak point.

5. Summarize strong and weak points and develop a plan for improvement.

Recommendations

If standard or normal approaches to a problem fail to give results, the foreman should try unusual approaches. The people and situation involved may not respond to normal approaches as well as they will to unusual ones. However, irregular methods should not be tried until the foreman is completely sure that ordinary methods will not be successful.

Counseling: Lack of Skill

Narrative of the Situation: Case 8

Reba, in her early forties and with no previous experience in manufacturing, was employed as an assembler of small parts. Her first job was assembling small parts and soldering them into place. Only routine decisions such as correct placement were required. There was enough difference in parts and the place designed for each that only one brief explanation was normally required.

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After explaining the placement approximately eight times in three hours, Reba's foreman decided to move her to a simpler operation.

The second operation was the sticking of parts into a block in four rows of five parts each. The block was not square, so Reba only had to decide from which side she would start her rows. It made absolutely no difference which side was used as the origin. She had considerable trouble in making such a decision and discussed the problem with her foreman. The foreman again explained the problem and asked her to observe another operator. Reba was then able to accomplish the job, though at a slow rate. Feeling that her age might be the cause, the foreman decided to give her some time to gain confidence and speed.

Over the next six-weeks period, Reba exhibited very slow progress. At the end of the six weeks, she was transferred to another line that was being started.

Reba asked the new foreman to let her try some different jobs. The foreman consented, trying Reba on two other jobs. Her quality and quantity were far below normal. The foreman explained the difficulties to her and moved her back to sticking the parts in blocks.

Company policy stated that all new employees were on probationary status during their first ninety days. Reba's ninety days were almost completed, and her performance was
unsatisfactory. The foreman and section foreman thought Reba should be discharged.

When confronted with the possibility of discharge, Reba felt that the foreman was being unfair and asked to talk with the section foreman.

In her discussion with the section foreman, Reba stated that she felt the number of job changes had caused her low performance. The section foreman pointed out that the changes had been made at her request and that she had been moved back to the blocking operation because of low performance on the other operations. The section foreman recommended that Reba voluntarily leave the company rather than wait for action by the foreman and section foreman.

Reba flatly rejected the idea of resignation and requested an interview with the personnel counselor. An appointment was made and the counselor was informed of Reba's work record. After the discussion with Reba, the counselor recommended to her that she resign; Reba accepted the suggestion and resigned immediately.

Reba's record shows that she is ineligible for rehire for assembly work, but she is described as having a good attendance record, a good personality, and a willingness to work.

Key Points

Reba did not have the mental and manual dexterity to perform the complex, or even the simple, assembly operations.
Her age and lack of previous experience may have been a contributing factor to her inefficiency and lack of skill. Foreman error in judging her skill can probably be discounted, since she worked for two different foremen.

**Principles**

In dealing with his employees, the foreman must remember that not only are people different, but they also have a right to be different. Employees differ in temperament, work pace, emotional stability, gregariousness, receptiveness to criticism, and many other characteristics. The supervisor or foreman will do well to remember that, because of these differences, a person may do well in one job and fail completely in another. The personnel staff services may be able to assist the foreman in judging differences, but in many cases the foreman will have to rely on his own insight, experience, and judgment. The foreman, therefore, has an obligation to the employee. The steps for successful employee counseling listed previously also apply in this case.

**Recommendations**

Increased emphasis should be placed on pre-employment testing of mental ability and manual dexterity. In this

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case, the lack of good pre-employment screening allowed the hiring of a person who did not possess the necessary qualifications. (The company concerned has since instituted an extensive pre-employment testing system.)
CHAPTER III

MANAGER-TO-FOREMAN RELATIONSHIPS

The relationship of the foreman to his superiors is the concern of this chapter. Although the foreman will have contact with higher positions in the direct line of management hierarchy, his primary concern will be with his immediate superior, and most emphasis is placed on this relationship. Their relationship will affect the over-all efficiency of the organization.

The efficiency of the organization (the degree to which it achieves its goals) depends on managers' working out sound policies and plans and employees' carrying out these plans as prescribed. Each level of management has responsibilities for: (1) conceiving objectives, policies, and subpolicies for the next lower level to implement; (2) communicating these policies; (3) setting standards of performance; (4) organizing the work and the subordinates to perform it; (5) motivating the subordinates; (6) directing them; (7) coordinating their activities; (8) measuring their performance; and (9) getting continual feedback of information, results, and events, so that each successively higher level can revise the plans where necessary and initiate new programs.
for the successively lower levels of management responsibility.¹

The manager has certain other responsibilities to his subordinates which may be divided into four parts: (1) the subordinate must be able to discuss his job responsibilities and everyday problems freely and openly in conference with his manager; (2) the subordinate must be able to operate in a situation that fosters cross-fertilization of ideas; (3) the manager must understand the role of human relations in the performance and job satisfaction of their subordinates and (4) the manager must see the relation between principles of management and his own job experiences.²

The general points under consideration are the recipient of delegation, communication, and recognition of effort, as these appear to be of particular importance to manager-foreman relationships.

**Delegation**

Two cases concerning delegation are analyzed together, as the same principles are involved. In Case 9 the principles were applied, while in Case 10 these same principles were violated.


Narrative of the Situation: Cases 6 and 10

Case 6. — Sam was the manager of the assembly-test branch in an electronics manufacturing plant. A graduate of one of the military academies, Sam had served on active duty for several years. His first position in industry was as an assembly line foreman. From assembly, Sam moved to the test section and was promoted to test section foreman. A departmental reorganization occurred one year later and he moved up to branch manager for assembly and testing.

One of Sam's first acts was to call his section foremen together and explain his requirements and what he expected of each section foreman.

Sam explained to the assembly section foreman that the foreman would be required to carry most of the load for assembly, as Sam had been in assembly for a period of only six weeks (two years previously). Sam further stated that any suggestion made by the assembly section foreman would be accepted at face value. These statements made it quite clear to the assembly section foreman that his recommendations would have to be exact and submitted only after careful thought and planning.

In practice, Sam left the daily administration entirely to the section foremen. The section foremen gave him weekly verbal reports on the status of their respective sections. Sam made occasional suggestions, but these suggestions did
not have to be put into effect if there were reasons to disregard them.

The section foremen, in turn, concentrated on advanced planning and development of subordinates. Daily routine problems were referred back to the respective line foremen.

The manner in which Sam controlled the branch was a major factor in the high morale of the branch. Section foremen and line foremen would voluntarily spend extra hours completing projects in advance of deadlines or completing extra jobs. Attendance was excellent and all production goals were exceeded.

The high morale also spread to the employees. Turnover, absentee, and tardy rates dropped to a new low. Both quality and quantity of production increased markedly. All personnel seemed quite cheerful and pleased with their work.

Case J5.--Jack was a branch manager whose previous experience had been in a staff function, with no actual experience in manufacturing. Jack had two section foremen reporting to him, one for assembly and one for test. The assembly section foreman had seven line foremen reporting to him, and the test section foreman had three line foremen reporting to him.

Less than one month after Jack's promotion to manager, the test section foreman requested and received a transfer
to another branch. A line foreman from assembly was promoted to test section foreman.

Jack had a keen interest in statistics and methods of statistical control. He gave the impression to his section foremen that anything that could not be resolved to a mathematical formula and controlled statistically was not important. The section foremen were constantly confronted with statistical information which they did not fully understand but by which their performance was being judged.

Jack also declined to delegate much of the planning and organizing function normally expected of the section foremen. He preferred to handle the actual detail decisions and merely direct the section foremen to implement the new plans.

On several occasions Jack bypassed his section foremen and conferred directly with the line foreman. These actions put a dual strain on the section foremen. On one side, the line foremen would be upset and would ask the section foreman what they should do when Jack asked for information. On the other hand, the section foreman was under a strain with Jack since the information received from the line foremen could be misleading because of their lack of information.

Jack also insisted on having written supporting documents or information on any action taken or any request for action. The desire for written communications came in the face of an executive drive to reduce the volume of paper work originating
in the division. The vice-president had repeatedly stated to foremen's groups that he strongly preferred face-to-face communication to written communications. The volume of paper work increased to the degree that the section foremen spent more time in follow-up on paper work than on planning, organizing, and controlling the actual work. Little time was available for anticipating trouble spots and taking corrective action to avert serious problems.

After four months under Jack's administration, the assembly section foreman requested and received a transfer to another branch. Shortly after the assembly section foreman received his transfer, Jack resigned to accept a position with another company. The morale of Jack's branch appeared to improve markedly after his resignation.

**Key Points**

Sam was interested in developing his men as managers; consequently, he delegated as much of the decision making as possible. Jack desired tight control over all persons under his jurisdiction. Jack also appeared to have little faith in the ability of his foremen, whereas Sam used the approach of confidence in his foremen's ability until proved otherwise.

**Principles**

Roethlisberger states that "in the modern business structure there is probably no relation more important than
that of the subordinate to his superior. It is in this area that most breakdowns in coordination and communications occur. Distortions of personal attitude and emotional disturbance also occur in this area.

The foreman's, or subordinate's, personal dependence upon judgments and decisions tends to make the foreman's position somewhat insecure. The foreman feels constant pressure to adjust to the superior's demands and to seek the superior's approval. The foreman finds himself constantly evaluating his superior's actions as to what effect they may have on the foreman's future. The foreman also finds himself evaluating the performance of his employees in terms of possible criticism it may bring to him. This preoccupation with the desires of the superior may lead to inaction on the foreman's part.

As Given points out, the foreman or other management personnel must have the freedom to fail. This does not imply or suggest that a foreman will be allowed to make continued and costly mistakes. Rather, the foreman must feel free to act after due deliberation and planning, and know that if failure does occur, punishment will not always follow. The superior would help the foreman analyze the cause of failure.

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4 Ibid.

5 Ibid.
and encourage the foreman to try again. Of course, repeated mistakes under related conditions may well call for punishment. 6

The freedom-to-fail concept does not imply that the foreman must act on his own initiative entirely. It should mean that the foreman has the opportunity to act on his own initiative and may secure the help and advice of his superior whenever needed. 7

The foreman needs definite objectives for his activity. These objectives must be a part of element of the over-all business objectives and must contain goals. These objectives and goals must also balance the immediate and long-range future. 8

Drucker states, "The supervisor needs the authority that goes with the responsibility for reaching these objectives." 9

The foreman needs knowledge of the company's operations, structure, goals, and performance. Furthermore, the foreman needs the means to reach the objectives set forth and a system of measurement to gauge his results.

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6William B. Given, Jr., Bottom-up Management (New York, 1949), pp. 6-7.
7Ibid.
9Ibid.
The foreman's status cannot be overlooked when considering the total position. The foreman needs manager status. The position must be meaningful in itself and big enough to enable him to represent his men upward. His position must also be such that his superior listens to him and takes him seriously. 10

The foreman, then, is constantly faced with the problem of keeping his superior informed as to what is happening at the work level and needing to communicate this information in such a manner that unfavorable criticism is not forthcoming. The foreman resolves the problem in various ways, depending on his own personal history, personality, and temperament. Some foremen may meet the problem with silence, while others become quite voluble. Still other foremen may use the approach of staying away from the superior's attention, while their counterpart may approach the superior and divert his attention to certain positive accomplishments. The foreman, being basically loyal and wanting to be secure, resolves the conflict in such a way that good relations are maintained with his superior. The foreman will act in accordance with his functional relations and the logics of management. 11

Thus, the foreman, like each individual in the modern industrial structure, is in effect painfully tutored to focus his attention upward to his immediate

10 Ibid., pp. 324-325.
11 Roethlisberger, op. cit., p. 143.
superiors and the logics of evaluation they represent, rather than downward to his subordinates and the feelings they have. 12

Recommendations

It appears that the best approach to management of foremen is to delegate as much authority and responsibility as an individual can absorb or as much as the nature of the job will allow. Further, this delegation must carry the manager's faith in the ability of the recipient to do the job adequately until this faith is proven unjustified.

Recognition of Effort

Narrative of the Situation: Case 2

John was a section foreman in the manufacturing branch and Bill was one of his line foremen. Bill had an idea for a fixture to simplify one of the assembly operations and discussed it with John. John decided the idea was not a good one and told Bill to forget it.

A few weeks later, Bill and another foreman were discussing some mutual problems when John walked up and joined the discussion. John stated that he had an idea for a fixture and was having several made for all the foremen in the section to use.

When John told Bill and the other foreman the exact nature of the fixture, Bill asked if the idea was John's.

12 Ibid.
When John replied that it was, Bill was understandably shocked that John would not give him credit for the idea; the fixture was identical to the fixture he had proposed earlier. Bill then declared that he would not offer any further suggestions to John, because John used such suggestions for his own benefit.

**Key Points**

John claimed credit for an idea which was suggested by Bill. He failed to recognize Bill's contribution in any manner.

**Principles**

The employees expect the foreman to maintain satisfactory working conditions, to maintain discipline, to promote cooperative effort and good will, to represent the employees to management, to promote and transfer impartially, and to rate fairly in wage determination. The foreman will be expected to encourage suggestions and give credit where credit is earned.  

The superior should compliment good suggestions as well as giving credit where credit is due. Also, management must work toward creating an environment in which people will

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be motivated to develop themselves. This would mean giving
the subordinate an opportunity for creativity and growth.¹⁵

Recommendations

John could have maintained rapport with Bill and gained
credit for himself by recognizing the idea as Bill's. Upper
levels of supervision would have recognized and appreciated
his ability to discern usable ideas and commend his employees'
efforts.

Communications: Sale of a Management Program

Narrative of the Situation: Case 15

After completion of a careful and extensive study of
the needs of the manufacturing branch, a group of officials
in the middle management realm decided to propose a work
simplification program.

A proposed course outline and objectives of the course,
along with costs and benefits expected, was presented to top
management. Top management was enthusiastic in its acceptance
of the program.

The middle management group proceeded with the course
plans and engaged a consultant in work simplification to
assist in the further development of the program.

¹⁵Albert F. Watters, "Personnel Management: Future
Problems and Opportunities," Personnel, XXXVIII (January-
During the establishment of the course, extensive effort was expended to sell the program to the employees as well as to top management. Most employees were as enthusiastic in acceptance of the program as were middle and top management. However, the course was not sold to the first- and second-echelon supervisors. The extent of selling to this group consisted of merely telling them that the program was being established and was strongly supported by upper levels of management. Consequently, the first and second echelons were not sold and attitudes about the program ranged from mild support to outright hostility.

The program had been established with the idea of having the employees submit work-saving projects during the course of the formal instruction period. The administration also hoped that, upon completion of the course, the trainees would continue to develop work-saving projects. A key person in the program was the trainee's immediate supervisor, whose support was vital in that he would have to assist the trainee in implementing the trainee's project and evaluating the results.

As a result of the immediate supervisor's attitudes, most trainees submitted projects only during the formal course and then seemed to forget the program. The necessary support and encouragement by the immediate supervisor was not given.
In the instances where immediate supervisors were sold on the program, some of the trainees submitted as many as six additional projects, not including many suggestions that worked to make more pleasant work surroundings but small actual savings. Also, the employees under this type of supervisor had much higher morale.

As a result of selling everyone except the first- and second-echelon supervisors, the program has not been as successful as it could have been. By no means could the program be termed a failure, but the full value of the efforts expended were not realized.

Key Points

Employees, upper management, and middle management were sold on the work simplification training course; the first- and second-echelon supervisors were not. Since many of the trainees failed to continue the work simplification approach, the unconvinced supervisors appear to play a major role in the success of the training program.

Principles

Mosel suggests that to be successful a training program (1) must have usable content, (2) the trainee must learn this content, and (3) the trainee must be motivated to change his job behavior to reflect what he has been taught.16

Motivation to use the acquired knowledge may be due to the functional or gratifying aspect of having the knowledge and using it. The motivation can be reinforced by the reward system inherent in the job.\textsuperscript{17}

The rewards may be formal in that promotions, pay increases, or bonuses would be received as a result of application of the new knowledge. The less formal and informal rewards would include praise from the supervisor, change in status in relation to fellow employees, and many other informal social rewards.\textsuperscript{18} Goodwin says that participation by every one in the organization lends an atmosphere of friendliness, teamwork, understanding, sincerity, material confidence, and respect.\textsuperscript{19}

On the other hand, if no reward system exists, the trainee probably will not make an effort to apply his newly acquired knowledge. A negative reward system precludes any possibility that the trainee will change his job behavior in any manner. Examples of negative rewards are criticism of new methods by co-workers or supervisors, social ostracism, and other informal pressures such as frowns, questioning glances, skeptical tone of voice, and disregard of the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{17}\textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{18}\textit{Ibid.}
  \item \textsuperscript{19}Herbert F. Goodwin, "Everyone Participates in Work Simplification," \textit{Advanced Management}, XXIV (December, 1959), 12-15.
\end{itemize}
employee's success as a result of utilizing what he has learned.20

Recommendations

The first- and second-echelon supervisors are vital to the training program if maximum success is to be obtained. These supervisors should be thoroughly sold on the objectives and benefits to be gained by a work simplification training program.

20 Mosel, op. cit., pp. 56-64.
CHAPTER IV

FOREMAN-TO-FOREMAN AND STAFF-GROUPS RELATIONSHIPS

Previous chapters have dealt with the foreman's relationships in the direct chain of command, both upward and downward. This chapter explores the other relationships of the foreman in an organization; that is, the associations he has with others who occupy positions on the same level with his position.

In his relationships with other foremen and staff groups, the foreman is confronted with two organizations, the formal and the informal. The formal organization and relationships are indicated on the official organizational charts, as they are established by upper levels of management. Upper levels of management do not develop the informal organization; it is a spontaneous development of the organization or, more precisely, of the individuals within the organization.1

The informal organization also leads to informal authority exercised by staff over line functions.2 No actual authority is delegated to staff, as the unity of command


would be violated. In addition to informal authority, staff may have an unofficial role of assisting the executives in learning of irregularities at the production levels.

The three groups with which the foreman will have daily or even hourly contact are (1) the other foremen in the same group, (2) the quality control group, usually embodied in the quality control inspector, and (3) the materials planning group. Contact with other groups such as engineering, industrial engineering, accounting, and personnel will be less frequent.

The foreman will face problems as a result of his contact with other groups, but regardless of whether the problems stem from official or unofficial sources, they can be solved by cooperation and good communications.

Cooperation: Assistance to Another Foreman

Narrative of the Situation: Case 13

Mac did not have a night shift on his line; Phil had a full night shift. During the night shift, personnel from Phil's line borrowed equipment from Mac's line and failed to return the equipment to its proper place.


Mao, obviously quite upset, contacted Phil about some equipment that was missing from his line. It was not the first time that equipment had been missing from his line at the beginning of the day shift.

When Phil learned of the missing equipment, he was concerned and expressed his desire to help locate the equipment. Mao seemed to be surprised about the cooperation he received.

Phil later learned that Mao had expected to receive little or no cooperation and had been prepared to take the matter to a higher level. The difficulties were solved in a matter of a few minutes and both foremen were satisfied. Both foremen continued to work together very closely; they managed to solve subsequent problems with very little friction.

**Key Points**

Mao expected to receive little or no cooperation from Phil and was prepared to be argumentative. When Phil proved to be cooperative, an air of problem solving was developed and a solution quickly and easily decided upon.

**Principles**

Individual foremen with a particular unit of the organization are often called upon to assist each other. Often, the success of the entire operation of the group will depend upon the degree of cooperation that the related foremen exercise. Frequently, in the interest of cooperation the individual
foreman will be called upon to submerge his own personal interests to the greater interest of all.\(^5\)

Cooperation does not necessarily mean "doing for" someone; it is "doing with" someone. The "with" implies a willingness on the part of the individual, whereas the "for" implies force or reluctance.\(^6\)

The assistance that one foreman is called upon to render may be in the nature of sharing experience with a lesser experienced foreman. The assistance may also be in a more direct nature such as assistance in maintenance and repair of equipment, manpower, equipment, and technical information.\(^7\)

Unfortunately, these lateral relations are not usually formally defined. The foreman will find that the degree and amount of cooperation he receives will depend on the personal relationships he has with the other foremen. The attitudes of each foreman's superior will also affect the degree and amount of cooperation foremen give and receive.\(^8\)

Theoretically, foremen on the same levels enjoy equal status. In practice, status is not always equal. Such social symbols as age, earnings, and experience come into force. Another large determining factor is the individual foreman's


\(^6\)Ibid.

\(^7\)Dubin, *op. cit.*, p. 144.

\(^8\)Ibid.
relation to his superior. If one foreman's position is weaker than another foreman's position in respect to the superior, personal antagonism may develop and seriously limit the effectiveness and degree of cooperation existing between respective foremen.\(^9\)

**Recommendations**

There are no recommendations, for in this case the foremen concerned met the situation in a cooperative manner and solved the problem amiably.

**Cooperation: Change in Specifications**

**Narrative of the Situation: Case 14**

Joe was an engineer in charge of assembly specifications for a small electronic part. He periodically reviewed the specifications to make certain that they were technically correct and had not become obsolescent.

Joe discovered that one subassembly used was not being washed prior to use. He issued a specification to the assembly line covering the wash procedure for the subassembly; included in the wash procedure was a limit on the time the subassembly could be stored after washing.

Upon receipt of the specification, Phil, the assembly line foreman, realized that the limited storage time would cause some inconvenience. The time limit would mean that

\(^9\)Ibid., pp. 144-145.
the washing equipment would have to be set up and taken down twice daily. If the storage time limit could be lengthened, the number of times the equipment would have to be set up could be reduced. Joe was the only person who could change the specification, so Phil decided to discuss the matter with him.

In the discussion with Joe, Phil learned that the time limit was to ensure that only clean parts were used. Phil suggested that he be allowed to wash large quantities of subassemblies and store them in clean, sealed containers. Joe readily agreed and the specification was changed accordingly.

**Key Points**

Joe was under no specific obligation to Phil to make any changes in the specification, but he was willing to listen to Phil's suggestion. Since the suggestion was workable, Joe readily agreed to the change.

**Principles**

Although the staff groups usually do not have direct or delegated authority over line groups or persons, they may exercise informal authority. The informal authority may derive from close contact between the two groups or between individuals of the same status from each group.\(^{10}\) Another way in which this informal authority develops is through

\[^{10}\text{Mann, op. cit., pp. 460-462.}\]
delegation (to staff by middle or upper management levels) of the responsibility for certain highly specialized or technical areas.\textsuperscript{11} The authority over the special areas may easily spread to broader degrees than originally intended.\textsuperscript{12}

Every member of lower and middle line management is subject to influence from staff groups which are psychologically indistinguishable from the authority exercised by the upper line management.\textsuperscript{13}

Although staff groups may exercise some authority, their main source of effectiveness lies in securing the cooperation of line personnel. The personalities, attitudes, relative status, and concepts of both the staff and the line will play an important part in the degree of cooperation the staff groups receive from the line personnel.\textsuperscript{14}

**Recommendations**

Joe and Phil present a good example of the effectiveness of staff and line personnel cooperation. It appears that staff and line need not be in conflict if each will respect the other's rights and cooperate in working out solutions for differences in opinions, concepts, and methods.


\textsuperscript{12}Mann, *op. cit.*, pp. 460-462.

\textsuperscript{13}McGregor, *op. cit.*, pp. 145-176.

Communications: Quality Control and Foreman Conflict

Narrative of the Situation: Case 15

The organizational relationship of the manufacturing department and the quality control department was a pure line-to-staff function. The foreman had no authority to set quality standards. The standards were established by the product and quality assurance engineers. In general, the quality control inspector was not definitely required to discuss his proposed actions with the foreman prior to rejecting work or writing deviation reports. In usual practice, however, the inspector would discuss the action with the foreman and try to secure correction without undue paperwork.

Another fairly common practice was for the quality control inspector to discuss any possible trouble areas with the line foreman although the area might not be covered by a specification. In this case, the problem was the length of time curing ovens could be left open.

The quality control inspector had noted that the doors remained open as long as fifteen minutes. The quality control inspector then contacted his superior and discussed the problem with him. The product engineer was also contacted. The product engineer decided that fifteen minutes was much too long.

The quality control inspector returned to the assembly line and informed the assistant line foreman of the problem.
The assistant did not inform the line foreman of the discussion, and the bad practice continued.

A few days later, the quality control foreman published a memorandum to the product engineer, the line foreman, the foreman's superior, and the manufacturing superintendent, pointing out the bad practice. He stated that the line foreman had been notified several times and no action had been taken. He further stated that he thought this indicated indifference and carelessness on the part of all persons involved.

The line foreman was quite disturbed as the memorandum was the first indication to him that a problem existed. The line foreman talked with the quality control foreman and explained that the memorandum was his only notice of the problem.

The quality control foreman then checked further with the quality control inspector and discovered that it had been the assistant line foreman, not the line foreman, who had been informed. The quality control foreman issued a correction to the memorandum. The line foreman told the assistant line foreman that he (the foreman) should always be promptly informed of all problems.

**Key Points**

The main cause of the problem in this case was the failure of the assistant foreman to inform the foreman of the process.
problem. The quality control inspector contributed somewhat to the problem by his failure to make certain that the foreman had been made aware of the situation.

Principles

The role played by staff departments and staff personnel in the foreman's job is much the same as the role played by other equal-level foremen. The relationship is not one of direct control but rather that of assistance. The staff groups with which the foreman has regular contact include repair and maintenance, industrial engineers or standards and methods, engineering, safety, employment or personnel, quality control, planning, cost accounting, and stores or stockroom. The cooperation given to and received from these groups will vary with each occasion or situation. Much will depend on attitudes expressed and implied by all personnel concerned, as well as the quality and quantity of the assistance received by each.\(^\text{15}\)

Owens states:

For the line organization to be short-circuited by a staff department may have serious effects upon the foreman's attitude and his willingness to cooperate. The problem of the foreman is complicated by the fact that reports may be conveyed verbally and in informal conversation between the staff member and his chief. To protect himself, the foreman may be careful to report to the general foreman all significant developments affecting his department. Because of his peculiar

situation in matters of communication, the foreman has sometimes been described as "the man who is caught in the middle."\textsuperscript{16}

Whatever the value of the information received by the superior from staff groups or personnel, it results in pressure on the foreman. The superior may and often does request further information or explanations from, or give instructions to, the foreman based on the staff information. The foreman has no control over the information from staff. In fact, he may be unaware of the information until his superior initiates action. The result is that the foreman is under constant stress trying to anticipate the information that will flow from staff to his superiors. The foreman, as a result, spends much time preparing explanations, reasons, and alibis for anticipated questions by his superiors that are never asked.\textsuperscript{17}

Recommendations

The foreman or any other person with any management responsibility should always try to make certain that his words and actions are correctly understood by the recipient. He should always make an effort to deal with the proper person in the management of organization hierarchy. A complete understanding by a person who is not in control is just as

\textsuperscript{16}\textit{Ibid.}, p. 93.

\textsuperscript{17}Dubin, \textit{op. cit.}, p. 144.
ineffective as a misunderstanding on the part of the person who is in command.

Communications: Staff and Line Conflict

Narrative of the Situation: Case 16

Dennis was a member of a staff group which had the responsibility for materials planning and dispatching. It was Dennis' responsibility to be certain that sufficient materials were in stock at all times to maintain the assembly lines at their planned levels of production. The material in stock was coded with a lot number; the lines requisitioned material by lots. Because of certain technical aspects, all lots were not processed by assembly (the exact technical aspects are confidential). These lots were referred to as "odd-ball lots."

Customer requirements changed, necessitating the processing of some of the odd-ball lots. Phil, the assembly line foreman, had not been informed of the change in requirements. When Phil returned from a meeting, he noticed that one of the odd-ball lots had been delivered to his line. Since he had received no information concerning the odd-ball lot and had sufficient other material on hand, he returned the lot to stock. The dispatcher returned with the lot and informed Phil that he had been instructed by Dennis to deliver the lot to Assembly.
Phil immediately called Dennis and informed him that the assembly line had plenty of material without the odd-ball lot. Further, he had received no information from Engineering about the odd-ball lot and would not process the lot until approved by Engineering.

At this point the discussion became quite heated with several recriminations from both Phil and Dennis. As a result, no decision as to disposition of the odd-ball lot was reached.

A few minutes later, Phil received a call from Engineering explaining the change in customer requirements and the processing of the odd-ball lot. Phil stated that he would start processing the lot immediately.

Phil called the dispatcher and asked him to deliver the odd-ball lot to Assembly. Processing was started immediately upon receipt of the lot.

**Key Points**

Neither Phil nor the dispatcher had been previously informed as to the reason for processing the odd-ball lot. Although Dennis had an opportunity to explain the situation, he did not.

**Principles**

Staff personnel often think that line personnel are concerned only with the maintenance of line authority and independence, regardless of the situation or facts. This idea
often leads to the feeling among staff personnel that the line personnel lack appreciation of staff professional qualifications and accomplishments. There is also the feeling that line personnel are basically resistant to change and improvements.¹⁸

The attitudes discussed above often lead to a breakdown in communications between staff and line personnel.¹⁹ Once this breakdown occurs, the inevitable result is some personal antagonism, conflict over methods and misuse of staff tools and ideas.²⁰

Recommendations

The line foreman should be kept fully informed on events which will directly affect him. Also, staff and line personnel should each try to see the other's point of view and work out their differences in the best interest of the total organization. It is not inevitable that staff and line must be in conflict. There is conflict only if the personnel concerned allow it to develop.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

The foreman is the pivotal man in the business organization. To the worker he is management, and from this relation the worker's attitudes and interests for management will be decided. To management the foreman is the man who implements the decisions, carries out the objectives of the organization, and projects the picture of the worker to upper levels. However, the foreman may become the man who is caught between two powerful and opposing forces.

The purpose of this study was to analyze the position of the foreman in relation to management and to the employee on the basis of the major problems that confront the foreman. It became apparent from secondary source data that the major problems were human relations, with respect to both employee and management, and the evaluation of employee job performance. Human relations was divided into three areas: (1) foreman-to-employee relationships, (2) foreman-to-superior relationships, and (3) foreman-to-foreman and staff-activities relationships.

In his dealings with the employee, the foreman must remember that he is the image of management and his actions
will determine the outlook held by the employee toward
management. The foreman must also remember that each person
is an individual and has the right to be different from others.
His management action must, therefore, take these individual
differences into account.

The recognition of differences, however, cannot be allowed
to overrule the foreman's obligation to carry out management's
policies and objectives. This, then, is the basis of the
foreman's dual relationship. The foreman's primary responsi-
bility is to achieve a particular objective through the efforts
of his employees.

To secure the efforts of his people, the foreman must
earn their respect and confidence; he must maintain a balance
in his relationship between management and the employee.
Respect and confidence cannot be assigned or delegated; it
must be earned. To earn respect and confidence, the foreman
must be sure that his decisions are accurate and fair. He
must be sure that promotions, wage increases, transfers, and
work assignments are proper and well justified. If the fore-
man fails on these counts, he may well fail in his over-all
efforts as a foreman.

The foreman, then, owes a certain loyalty to the employee.
On the other hand, he owes a loyalty to management in the form
of his superior. This loyalty to his superior takes the form
of keeping the superior informed as to the important happenings
and projecting an accurate picture of the worker and his needs. An overdeveloped loyalty to the worker may cause conflict between superior and foreman.

In turn, the foreman depends upon his superior's judgments and decisions for his own job security. The need to communicate on the one hand and anxiety about his personal job security on the other hand may cause the foreman to minimize bad situations to avoid unfavorable criticism. This fear of criticism and job insecurity may cause the foreman to focus his attention upward rather than in both directions.

Other points that affect the foreman-to-superior relationship are freedom of action, degree of delegation of both authority and responsibility, definite objective, and managerial status. Without these points the foreman is reduced to a figurehead both in the eyes of the employee and of management. The foreman is then unable to complete the objectives assigned to him.

The third aspect of the foreman's human relations problems is his dealings with other foremen of equal level and the various staff activities and their personnel. In dealing with both staff agencies and other foremen, the foreman is often called upon to subjugate his own desire in the interest of the over-all objectives of the organization. However, a source of conflict develops in this area as a lack of equal status among foremen, although the same relative levels are
occupied by all foremen concerned. The foreman's age, education, and the status enjoyed by his superior, all contribute to the actual status held by the foreman.

Another source of conflict in the foreman's job is staff activities. The staff personnel may communicate directly with the foreman's superiors about situations that directly affect the foreman. The communication may be formal or informal; but, regardless of the nature, the effect is the same in that pressure on the foreman may be the result. Age, education, and status may play an important role in the foreman-to-staff relationship.

Case studies presented in this study are examples of the need for the foreman to practice good human relations with his employees and other members of the business organization. Some of the cases show a lack of understanding, misapplication of (or complete disregard for) the basic principles of good human relations. Others show how the principles do serve their intended purpose when successfully applied.

Conclusions

In general, failures do not appear to be catastrophic if the foreman realizes that he has failed and alters his course of action in such a way as to derive benefit from the failure. In certain instances, the failure in human relations may be disastrous insofar as the relations with that specific individual or group of individuals are concerned. The failure
may be disastrous to the foreman's career if it is a result of his neglect, laxness, or total disregard of the principles and techniques of good management relations.

To be successful as a representative of both management and worker, a foreman must rigidly adhere to the principles of good human relations. Deviations from any principles should not occur without careful consideration of all known or suspected details; even then, deviations are hazardous.

Recommendations

The prospective or beginning line foreman should study and analyze carefully the principles of human relations, as well as the material or technical principles of the foreman's responsibilities. The study program should include principles from secondary sources, role playing if possible, case analysis, formal group discussion of problems and principles, and informal discussions with experienced foremen. The foreman's superior is—or should be—another good source of information and help.

The foreman should also remember that there are as many varied human relations problems as there are people and situations; consequently, the foreman will never reach the point of saturation in his knowledge of human relations. As a result, he should always be receptive to new ideas and materials, and he should continually analyze his own line of conduct.
When practical, an internship program for prospective foremen is highly recommended. Ideally, this program should be a part of management training in college. The alternative would be a company training program for beginning foremen. The management student or novice foreman could obtain practice in the application of principles under the guidance of an experienced foreman without the possibility of making serious mistakes which could affect his entire career.

Case studies could definitely help the prospective foreman avoid mistakes by gaining vicarious experiences in actual situations. The case studies could be used in formal training programs or simply studied by the individual. In formal training programs the case studies could be used for written analysis, group discussion, role playing, and as a supplement to lecture programs. Also, by varying a few details in the case, the instructor, prospective foreman, or practicing foreman can create many different role-playing situations. The value of the cases are limited only by the ingenuity possessed by the reader.
BIBLIOGRAPHY

Books


BIBLIOGRAPHY—Continued


Articles


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