

The giving of orders

[Experience](#), [Meaning of Life](#)



Mary Parker Follett discusses the psychology and human behavior behind giving and receiving orders. There is so much more that goes into giving and receiving orders than meets the eye, and is not as straightforward as one would initially think. Follett begins by explaining that human beings are complex creatures, and that we are the sum of all of our past experiences, emotions, beliefs, desires, habits and trainings. This means that people respond in different ways, and most have formed certain habits of mind called habit-patterns. Essentially, when people have been acting a certain way most or all of their lives, changing these habits is nearly impossible. Even if you intellectually reason with someone, you are likely to encounter resistance if their developed way of thinking and acting goes against the concluded reasoning. People are only inclined to obey orders if it appeases their previously learned habit-patterns. This can often lead to confusion and confrontation, as a manager may view an order not being followed by an employee as that employee rebelling and not obeying, when that employee does not follow the order simply because it goes against their life-long habits. In order to address these habit-patterns, Follett states that it is essential to do three things: (1) build up certain attitudes, (2) provide for the release of these attitudes, and (3) augment the released response as it is being carried out. Follett provides an example of a salesman, where first he must create an attitude that the customer wants the item being sold, then allows the customer to fulfill this desire by finalizing the sale, and then provides the customer with references of other satisfied customers to help solidify their decision to purchase the item. This mentality can also be applied to business, and everyday life. It is important to note that in order to

do this, one cannot simply suppress the augments of the mind of the person in question, as that will only lead to dissatisfaction and contempt. For this to work successfully, one must unite and integrate the reasons for purchasing or agreeing in the eyes of the person in question (buyer, subordinate, etc.). Follett delves deeper into the human psyche by stating that at the core of every human being is the desire to direct their own lives, and the need to self-assert. The wish to govern one's own life is one of the most fundamental feelings in every human being. It is not desirable to be under the will of another person, especially by being ordered around. In many cases, when someone is ordered to do something, they feel that their self-respect is being threatened. This can lead to losing their temper, getting upset, or becoming defensive. An order can set a person on a course that is only going to be counterproductive when it comes to obeying or following that order. When an employee is upset and does not carry out an order, the objective is not being completed, and no one is benefiting from the situation. So, what is the best way to give an order? How can orders be given so that employees feel respected and valued, and carry out the orders without resentment?

Although there is argument over the best way to give an order, Follett suggests that one of the best ways to tackle giving orders is not necessarily to give orders but to share them, and accept orders given by the situation. When decision-making is shared, getting upset or defensive is less likely to happen when that person's input was taken into consideration. Merely bossing someone around and ordering them to do things is not productive, but if you collaborate with someone and share ideas, then when it is time to divvy up the work they will not feel so much like they are being ordered to

do a task as they are being asked to contribute and have a combined level of responsibility. In Follett's paper, she quotes a man from the Coal Commission who states, " It is all right to work with anyone; what is disagreeable is to feel too distinctly that you are working under anyone. " Lastly, Follett discusses how to handle pointing out mistakes. She indicates that blame for the sake of blaming will not lead to anything productive, and can only open the doors for more feelings of disrespect, resentment and disobedience. Follett states that pointing out mistakes needs to accomplish something, such as education, so that mistake is less likely to happen in the future. This is the essence of constructive criticism, where the critique has meaning and can be helpful instead of simply just hurtful or insulting. She also implies that bringing up something positive as well, something that makes the worker feel good or proud, is a great idea to potentially offset mentioning the mistake. This can be compared to the idea of a Compliment Sandwich, which is when a compliment is given first so as to help appease the receiver, then to deliver the critique, and then to wrap up with another compliment so as to have the receiver leave on a good note. The Compliment Sandwich is widely used in life and business, and is considered to be an effective and polite way to deliver critique without upsetting the receiver.