

The unnatural act of leadership, book review essay

Law



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Management and Development The Unnatural Act of Management February

26, 2013 I began this book like most books, with great anticipation that it

was going to be amazing, why else would a qualified instructor assign it. I

assumed that it would be a shining example of the finest managerial

principals in existence all compacted into a simple to read text with plenty of

graphs and helpful handouts. I was certain that I would be a more effective

leader for having read it.

I spent time strategizing how I would write my paper with great enthusiasm.

Then, I read the book. In the first few pages I found myself so caught up with

the character development that I quickly lost sight of the big picture. I mean

how could I be expected to believe that any one person could accurately

describe an entire management team with such accuracy. Richard

Thompkins' descriptions and predictions were almost humorous. His intuition

into his co-workers was uncanny. From their personal relationships to the

weaknesses in one fell swoop. I wanted to meet Richard myself.

As the story developed I later appreciated the lack of filler material as the

characters were introduced and it also made for a quick refresher when I was

trying to predict who was going to be effected next by Brent's plans. I quickly

became invested in the ninety day project. I could recognize this was a

process being explained with the assistance of a story, or a true manager

refusing to have an editor alter his vision. Regardless, I decided to step back

and focus on the big picture, the actual process of examining an existing

managerial team and operations to evaluating its effectiveness through

strong managerial principals.

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Off we went. Learning about the people you are working with, their qualifications and personality traits is imperative. Understanding how they're perceived by their peers is critical. Richard Thompkins' descriptions were no more than his perception regardless how accurate they might have been. The second part of the equation is the one on one interaction with individuals to develop our own opinions and "assumptions". As I began to understand the characters I couldn't help but begin to assign them new names, names associated with people I work with even myself at times.

For the sake of this paper I'll make up names and rank. Moving into the early chapters I found that my Chief aligns himself strongly with many of the theories and practices that Brent spoke of from conducting effective meetings to managing work stress effectively. Unfortunately prior to his arrival our organization struggled to follow some basic principles that are imperative for success. Basics like "Read, Listen, Discuss, Observe, or Think." As police officers, "read" stands out as an exceptional oddity. The term "assumptions" was also introduced early in the book and I felt it needed to be developed in more detail.

In retrospect, I believe I struggled with the actual term used as "assumptions" as it has always had a negative connotation to me. Who hasn't heard the phrase, "When you assume you make an ass out of you and me?" Regardless, I did recognize that assumptions as introduced are made through communication, making it imperative that effective communication occur to reach valid "assumptions". As with any ideas or assumptions they can be altered rather quickly by a number of factors that arise.

Understanding this and managing them closely will avoid mistakes to having any major or lasting impact.

As employees grow and learn, regardless of rank or title, our assumptions of their abilities might lag or be clouded unless we are constantly communicating. I feel that managing by assumptions can be more effective if you understand who you are dealing with, regardless if you like them personally or not. I also recognize that assumptions can easily be influenced by emotions if it's not monitored properly. I can recognize my growth as manager significantly in this area. I pride myself on making good assumptions based on factual information available to me.

I value the decision making process more now that I align myself more clearly with upper management than the mind set of line officers. As a first line supervisor I fill in the blanks when the plans and processes have been identified. I recognize the overall need to establish goals and objectives that are clear and measurable but as a first line supervisor I usually find myself making suggestions and providing raw data which is manipulated and interpreted above my position. Chapter six, I read the title and got excited, What is Management and When Are You Managing?

Yes, now we are getting somewhere! I found some truth early on, kind of... Stanley had the position that you learn to be a good manager by managing not by going to school. Before I was promoted years ago I had already obtained my four year degree in Business Management and Organizational Leadership so I felt somewhat prepared. Denial is a nice zip code. Within months of being promoted to Sergeant I was escorted to private

meeting room by the two senior officers on my newly appointed team. Truly I don't remember what they said, but the feeling resonates to this day.

YOU KNOW NOTHING, BE QUIET, LISTEN, LEARN AND THEN MAYBE WE WILL LET YOU LEAD. I felt humbled, they had been respectful but firm and the message was clear...this was going to be much harder than I thought. I agree that it is very unnatural to decide to produce results through others, especially if we're better qualified to produce them. I had been a "go getter-kick ass and tell my backup to take names" kind of officer. As a supervisor the concept that others were going to produce results for me was foreign, I didn't even know it existed. Education would have been beneficial at that point but I didn't learn that in college.

So for that continuing education would have been welcomed, however I may have not been ready to learn the lesson regardless if I had heard it. I loved the management term given in this book. "Management is a mental process of establishing, and then indirectly achieving the right objectives in the right priority sequence and with sufficient resources." I have got to admit I felt like that was right on. Over the years I have worked on some level of this definition, but found that at times my priorities were off, or my resources were insufficient or simply the sequence was just not right.

I have absolutely no problem in making a decision, with haste. Now I can't guarantee that it will be a correct decision but as the years pass and the management process becomes more clear my assumptions become more accurate. Of course we should all be tweaking assumptions constantly. Recently our organization has been revamping tons of policies, to streamline and make things more efficient. One policy stands out when I think if this

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management term. As a patrol division we now have a written policy that says that no team can drop below the minimum staffing requirement of six officers.

As a patrol supervisor my current team only has seven officers assigned with one deployed over seas. Immediately the problem should be apparent. Each officer is required to flex four hours each pay period, attend training, manage overtime, and ensure vacation time is not carried over. I constantly hear other sergeants complaining that they are below staffing and that they can not operate their teams effectively. They constantly deny leave and training requests which only discourages the officers and causes dissent.

I strive not to bring any attention to my team's situation because if you provide a problem to another manager they are going to solve it, but probably not to your liking. I simply flex my team out in the early hours of the morning when there's minimal, to no call load, and they're tired anyway. I communicate with the traffic unit supervisor to supplement traffic officers to allow my officers time to attend training. Rarely does a traffic officer have to pick up a call but it allows me not to violate the policy intentionally.

I understand that resources are limited and I know my commanders are aware of the problem so reiterating it to them seems counter productive and unnecessary because I feel that we have sufficient resources. I was pleased to read the general rule that said, " the better the manager, the fewer resources required to be sufficient. " Amen. I believe my organization has shifted the mindset to that of one that measures a good manager/supervisor by the results that are being produced indirectly through our managerial resources.

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Being encouraged to show ownership while expected to shoulder the responsibility is a welcomed change. I agree that a good manager can manage anything. The next section spoke of determining the difference between stubbornness and persistence; I have to admit I began to sweat. Make no mistake I know that I can be stubborn and quite persistent and no one likes to look in the mirror in the morning. But as I read on I breathed a bit of a sigh. I quickly felt safe, knowing that when I make set an objective that I can't obtain I will not let it ruin me, and I will bow out, gracefully if possible.

I attribute this to an older brother that beat me at EVERYTHING my whole life. As for persistence, I think the word I use is "heart". If a person has "heart" they can overcome almost any other deficiencies, from talent to skill and almost common sense (almost). I think of a wonderful officer I had the privilege of supervising right out of the academy. I seem to get the "tough ones" but being that I thrive when challenged, and lavish in chaos, I was pressed to perform. This officer arrived and with a thick accent and introduced himself.

Apparently English was his third language, being from Thailand he struggled with the most basic cultural rituals we enjoy. Even Google was a foreign term. Each night we all worked to help him with everything from his radio traffic to his very poor sense of directions. He would fail, miss the mark, slip, forget, get lost, get made fun of, but he never gave up. He arrived early each night and left late every morning. He smiled, thanked those who helped him graciously, smiled at those who hurt him, smiled at those who he could help and had more heart than any other officer I had ever worked with.

He constantly asked questions, never fell into despair and with his determination made everyone respect him. His fortitude was impressive. He says I was his mentor and I taught him so much but I can't take credit for making him successful because to be honest he taught me every bit as much. He made my need to learn patience rewarding. Under other circumstances I would have resented someone that needed so much assistance to simply function as a first responder. He showed me it was worth the time and effort to give people all you can to help lift them up.

He made that lesson for me digestible, even enjoyable. I am proud of the officer he is today, so proud I'm writing about him years later while working on a ten page college paper on management. So as the book progresses Brent is starting to show his managers that he can make good assumptions. He values and encourages communications. He strives to include and share his thought process with his staff. Now this is certainly a new concept at my organization. Initially when my Chief would begin to explain his thought process I would grimace thinking that when he finished he was going to yell, "There ya happy! But he never did instead, he looked at me and would ask what I thought. I remember having to condition myself to be prepared to actually participate in the process instead of simply walking away wondering what in God's good name is rolling around in that little mans beady little mind. I thought that very thing quite frequently under my old Chief. I on the other hand had been chastised for explaining myself too much and giving too much information to my officers. Apparently just telling them to do something was suppose to be sufficient since they were being compensated so heavily financially.

I felt that if your subordinates and supervisors for that matter, knew your frame of mind and your thought process they could better manage their “assumptions” (hope you’re proud of me for using the term properly). In turn they could predict your decisions more quickly and learn to make better ones themselves as a result. Span of control was a relevant topic that I found mid way through. Recently our organization was restructured, removing three captains from the top of our command structure. As a first line supervisor I was not effected drastically however my supervisor has shifted completely away from his prior position.

With no lieutenants on the patrol shift I find myself with more p of control, unfortunately I feel my support is all but gone. I report to someone I rarely see and no longer have immediate feedback. I recognize the change was necessary and I am striving to find a balance. As for Brent by this point he’s gotten the managers in his corner, he’ s taking calculated risks, or should I say managing effectively by assumptions. His leadership has been almost too perfect in my opinion. No big blunders he never misspoke and was always right. After supervising for twelve years I’m going to call the flag.

I recognize that my Chief is a good manager because he says that everyone makes mistakes and all you have to do is sit down and watch for a while and you’ll see one. Maximizing Your Leverage with Direct Producers seemed like a lofty way to say, get your people to work for you. The title was a little pretentious but the chapter was actually one of my favorites. As first line supervisors I’ve grown to simply accept that many direct producers (patrol officers) will never develop a good understanding of management so I work

towards building the relationship between them and myself to bridge the gap.

I have always excelled and developing loyal relationships based on mutual trust. Unfortunately when trust, the foundation for me is missing, the relationship is essentially doomed. It will be superficial and dysfunctional. For this reason I hold honesty, trust, and moral fortitude in the highest regards as I develop relationships with my co-workers. I feel these three ingredients are our water, oxygen and food we need to survive. Regardless if subordinates understand why your asking them to perform a task, they will perform it for no other reason than you have demonstrated your dedicated to their survival.

I have learned over the years that I am not responsible for their happiness that is their responsibility. There was a very interesting couple of paragraphs that outlined the differences between supervisors and managers and he hit the nail on the head when he discussed the first line producers view of the two. It is like the twilight zone. I know that my officers see the sergeants as part of the command staff, however, command staff see sergeants more aligned with the officers. This does pose a difficult position for sergeants who are continuously left out of the communication loop.

I always say if you want me to manage your rumors you have to feed me some valid information. Without that, I'm forced to manage rumors by more misinformation. At least I can manage my own rumors better than those of others. As a first line manager I have finally figured out that my primary duty is to make my officers feel important. I think that could have summed up <https://assignbuster.com/the-unnatural-act-of-leadership-book-review-essay/>

that chapter. Considering I have a few pages left I'll expound a bit since I feel this is where my forte lies. Again, twelve years ago I was clueless; I thought if I could show the guys how great I was they would want to follow me.

Instead I learned that if I show them how great they are they will follow me. The biggest compliment I got was when an officer said, in shift change, that he would run into a brick wall if I asked him to. He added that he figured the wall would fall because why else would I order him to go. I was flattered that he would blindly follow my order, however he also indicated that he respected how I make assumptions (I used it again, gotta be worth 10 points). As an inexperienced supervisor I was concerned about each person liking me, the person they were interacting with. I would adjust for each individual subordinate accordingly.

I reflect back and can say that that it was not in the way of a servant leader but more of a teenager who wanted to be liked and accepted. With the years I learned that I was more effective when I was myself. I am a Christian, wife, mother of four, who happens to hold a position at an organization that requires me to guide, teach, and hold myself and others accountable for our actions. That simplified life drastically. I stay enthusiastic about my career, usually. I never ask anyone to do something I'm not prepared to do myself and I accept responsibility when I make mistakes.

I respect those who handle my mistake effectively and use them for what they are, chances to learn. I find disciplining subordinates exciting and challenging. Nothing satisfies me more than to handle a discipline session so effectively that the subordinate still wants to engage me in a personal conversation. The Motivation of Inspiration, deep. I mentioned that our <https://assignbuster.com/the-unnatural-act-of-leadership-book-review-essay/>

organization went through a drastic structure change recently. I also mentioned that I don't have the luxury of a lieutenant working with me. On weekends I am alone and during the peak hours of 4: 30pm to 7: 30pm I have no assistance.

The lieutenants developed their own hours and selected 7: 00am-3: 00pm and 7: 00pm to 3: 00am. However with the limited supervisors their schedules are constantly changing. Upon returning from a 6 weeks recovery from a foot operation I attempted to meet with my lieutenant on several occasions. I wanted to get an official update on how my team had done along with an update on what was going on with the organization. I had been away from work and had developed some doubts about my current career path. After a few days my lieutenant learned that I was meeting with someone above his rank.

He came to me and I confirmed that he had not made me a priority. Frustrated and betrayed he told me that making me " happy was not his job". I corrected him and assured him he was not responsible for my happiness but was responsible for my career development. I asked him what he felt his priorities were and he wiggled his finger towards the sky in a circle and said, " this". Not clear on his term I asked him to define it. He again said, this, the organization. I asked him to define who he felt made up the organization. He got even more frustrated and raised his voice.

I asked him to lower his voice and improve his argument. He said he didn't know what I wanted from him, adding that I was a sergeant he knew could handle anything. I explained it like this to him. My job is to check and fill my guys' gas tanks as needed each shift. His job, was to fill mine, and I was

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running on fumes. I conceded that I was a hybrid and could go farther than others but eventually would need fuel. Now, that doesn't mean that anything is wrong with my vehicle it just needs to be maintained. I think he understood and we both agreed to keep working on communicating with each other.

I also believe that people will rise to our expectations of them, another key element in motivating others. I have seen officers that struggle with other supervisors arrive on my shift defeated, ready to continue their struggles. I like to immediately empower them with some responsibilities. Certainly something they can succeed at, and then shower them with praise. The cycle then continues, elevating their tasks and responsibilities exponentially until they believe in the person I have told them I see. I had an officer who struggled with making decisions and his self esteem was shattered with all the discipline he'd received.

Being a very emotional person, he took discipline from his prior supervisor as a personal attack. I immediately gave him the responsibility to inspect vehicles when he arrived on my shift. At first he called with question after question. I encouraged him to complete all his inspections and upon completion we would address any questions he had. Inevitably in meeting with the other seven officers on his team many of his questions were resolved and he arrived with few questions and the completed inspections. I praised his resourcefulness and assigned him the task for the upcoming month.

He was excited to have a leadership role and began to act accordingly. With time he grew to be confident his decision making abilities and learned to

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accept discipline sessions from me as learning opportunities. Now this leads me into the marginal employee. They are out there and what a pain! I have learned much when dealing with this mess. For years I had a marginal employee working under me. She was not only marginal but she was high maintenance. Now to correct that statement, she was capable of working hard if she was “ happy”. So what did the under educated but highly experienced supervisor that I was do, that’s right I kept her “ happy”.

I managed her emotionally to motivate her professionally. Sounds easy enough huh? Unfortunately maintaining her happiness was utterly draining and was a daily time consuming venture. But I felt that proving that I could get impressive results out of a marginal employee would validate my ability to supervise. Boy was I dead wrong. I remember Brent giving the lesson in the book that brought it all back. Put those problems right back on them he explained, remove that unnecessary stress from yourself. I was moved away from that officer and she tanked with the next supervisor.

Of course she blamed him but I knew better. In the last month the teams were again moved around and after two years she would be reassigned to me. Believing that I could save her from her impending termination, if she could not turn it around, she began our first conversation with how happy she was to be working with me again, blaming her last supervisors for all her problems. She then admitted that she was upset with me because I had not accepted her Facebook request. I took that very moment to make the path ahead very clear to her. I told her in no uncertain terms that I would not be managing her happiness.

I would however be holding her accountable for her actions. I also told her that my Facebook was not a topic for discussion. She chose to become insulted instead of enlightened. Within three weeks of being reassigned to my shift she resigned after sixteen years. I know I was not the reason, but I also feel she lost the comfort she was envisioning on my team. I must say that although personally I liked this person, as I supervisor I was ecstatic she chose to leave the organization. Conveniently a few chapters later I came across a section to deal with problem employees.

I felt enamored with the comment that marginal employees are the greatest waste of time, money and opportunities within an organization. I have learned that first hand. Being that I have reached ten pages and don't want to be too much of an overachiever I want to focus the criticizing of others and termination of employees. I was very surprised when I read that Barbara was scared to fire Chuck. Barbara's character development didn't foreshadow that insecurity. Regardless Brent knew exactly what to say and was able to convince Barbara to handle a situation immediately after their pep talk.

Now I can go on and on about several other topics that arose in the latter pages (especially Stress Transfer) but I'm going to close with this, I enjoyed the lessons shared in this book. However I wouldn't recommend anyone read this book unless they are borrowing it from me. My book has received full scrutiny and I have highlighted all the pertinent lessons, motivational quotes, managerial theories and terms so there is no need to read all the filler. By the way, I truly think that Brent wears Superman underwear everyday.