



The role of managers most people don't know

June 12, 2018 | By Rey Elbo | Beyond Buzzwords

FORGET Management 101's planning, leading, organizing and controlling – especially the last element “requiring” managers to be in command-and-control. Why not? That's because command-and-control is a decades-old philosophy that has its roots in the military.

Remember this?: “Obey first, before you complain.”

C2, the moniker for command-and-control, is a “set of organizational and technical attributes and processes ... [that]employs human, physical, and information resources to solve problems and accomplish missions,” according to military scientists Marius Vassiliou, David S.

Alberts and Jonathan R. Agre in “C2 Re-Envisioned: the Future of the Enterprise (2015).”

Since many of us here are non-military personnel, the best option is to take it from management theorist Peter Drucker (1909-2005), who said: “So much of what we call management consists of making it difficult for people to work.” Think about it.

Why make it wittingly or unwittingly difficult for employees to get their work done? Many of us don't realize it because it's in plain sight. As one example, managers may not have realized the negative impact of having too many signatories, even in the most simple work process – like the approval of the employees' leave application or a P1,000 petty cash for an emergency purchase.

How about those endless meetings that produce minutes but waste hours?

And now, in this age of high technology and crippling traffic, it's time to question why salaried people must have a perfect attendance, when they're paid for producing actual, tangible results, and not because they're sitting at their workstation for eight hours?

The most stupid policy was the subject of a complaint by one of my students against his employer's lunch-break rule prohibiting the workers from sleeping!

Human resource expert Liz Ryan makes a connection between corporate policies, team passion, worker's performance, and of course – profitability: “The more policies, the less passion you'll get from your team. The less passion, the less exciting the team's performance will be. The less exciting the performance, the lower your profits will be.”

Bingo! How could the workers perform their best if every step of the way they need management approval or must follow certain restrictive, stupid rules? Sure, we accept that certain control exists for a reason, but if it goes overboard, it can be very frustrating to people who don't like a North Korean work environment.

Even Apple's biggest management ego, Steve Jobs (1955-2011), lashed out at his managers for constantly looking over the shoulders of their people: "It doesn't make sense to hire smart people and tell them what to do; we hire smart people so they can tell us what to do."

American automobile executive Lee Iacocca (b. 1924), who developed Ford Mustang and Pinto cars, had pioneered this belief. He said he hired people brighter than him and he had to "get out of their way."

Shigeo Shingo (1909-1990), the man who invented pokayoke (mistake-proofing system) and one of the grandfathers of quality, advised management on the "four purposes of improvement: easier, better, faster and cheaper," which must be done "in that order of priority."

First, make it easy. Second, make it better. Third, make it faster. And last, make it cheaper. How are you going to do that? The goal is for managers to make it easy for their workers to do their job. Rather than wait for the exit interview to happen, be proactive by doing the "stay" interview instead. Ask those simple questions: How can I make your job easy to do? What are the resources you need? What are your current concerns? How can I help you succeed at work? How can we meet your career development expectations?

No, the passive employee suggestion boxes do not really help management that way because it does not serve as a better substitute to a one-on-one communication process with the workers. The answers should come casually and directly from the horse's mouth.

Second, make the work environment better by discovering and eliminating a toxic work environment. The list of low-cost solutions, if not zero-cash motivational strategies abound. Then, constantly measure management effort with the turnover rate and employee morale to know if you're in the right direction.

Third, make everything work faster. Start with the most irritating work process that boils the workers' blood. How fast do you work to release workers' benefits, for instance? What documentary requirements are duplications of other systems that you can do without to fast-track employee services?

How about "cheaper?" If the workers are happy on the job, maybe they would be too shy to ask for a raise. Of course, I'm joking.

Management is all about getting things done with the best possible results through its people. If there's only one thing you should understand about management, then it's not about C2's formula of checking or inspecting their work. Get out of the way. Allow them to do a good job and make them responsible for it. In doing this, managers should spend much time assisting people how their work can be made easier, better and faster.

Cutting the cost of workers' pays and perks? Market forces should decide that for you. Pay cheap, and sooner than you can imagine, your best and brightest workers will soon be gone.

###