



John Hendry

MANAGEMENT

A Very Short Introduction

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Management: A Very Short Introduction

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MANAGEMENT

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Preface and acknowledgements

In this book I have sought to provide an introduction to management for three main groups of people: people who may have practised management but have never studied it and are intrigued to know something about the ‘subject’ of management; people who may have studied it but have never practised it and are interested in how their textbook learning relates to what managers actually do; and people who have neither studied nor practised it but are curious as to what it is all about.

The subject is an enormous one. Hundreds of millions of people around the world are employed as managers of one kind or another. Millions of students take management courses at colleges and universities. And hundreds of thousands of academics teach, research, and publish papers in the subject, in maybe a thousand academic journals. In a short work like this it is impossible to do justice to even a small fraction of that research, but I have tried here to give an outline of how thinking about management has evolved, where it now stands, and how it has impacted and is impacting on management practice.

My own experience of management starts and finishes in practice. I learnt first from my father, Ian, an industrial manager who brought to his job a deep concern for and commitment to the

people who worked for him. From him I learnt that people work best when they are happy, appreciated, and can trust in the integrity and fairness of their managers, and that this is especially so when organizations are under pressure and performance is critical. I subsequently found myself managing schools of business and hope that, whatever my limitations, I at least managed to put this insight into practice.

Between these points, after spells in industry, accountancy, the public sector, and a variety of university departments, I studied and taught management as an academic. Among the many people who have influenced me in this period, and whose mark is in some way on this book, two in particular stand out, both of whom I first met as faculty colleagues at the London Business School. One is Charles Handy, whose popular writing on management and organizations has been an inspiration to millions. The other is John Roberts, now at the University of Sydney, who has been a close academic colleague for nearly thirty years and is the most insightful academic researcher I have ever worked with. Both are also brilliant teachers, and both manage, in their different ways, to combine a deep appreciation of the potential lying in every human being with a clear-headed recognition of human frailty. An understanding of what it is to be human and, at the same time, only too human, is at the core of any understanding of management, whether theoretical or practical, and this book is dedicated to Ian, Charles, and John.

Any book like this incurs countless debts, both to other authors (nothing in it is original, except for any mistakes!) and to those who have helped it along the way. I should particularly like to thank David Musson and Andrea Keegan at Oxford University Press for their faith in the project, and Ismael al Amoudi for some stimulating conversations and valuable critiques.

John Hendry
Cambridge, January 2013

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Chapter 1

Management and managing

Introduction

Talking to a friend, John explained that his partner, Mary, was away for two weeks managing a project overseas, that their son, Peter, had managed to break a leg playing football, but that he was just about managing.

When we think of ‘management,’ the first thing that comes to mind is an association with work and employment. Management is what ‘managers’ do, typically in a business or other organization, or it is a collective term for these managers, when contrasted with other employees (‘labour’ or ‘workers’) who don’t have the same responsibilities. Managing, in this context, has strong connotations of being in control, of directing things, of designing and implementing systems and processes. Outside the work context, however, we often use the language of managing ironically, to suggest a lack of control (managing to break a leg), or as synonymous with coping, or getting by, where control has more to do with somehow preventing things from falling apart than with actively directing them.

These colloquial meanings of managing are relatively recent. The word originates from a Latin term for handling or controlling a horse, and it was gradually extended from controlling horses