

TOUGH-MINDED MANAGEMENT

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Tough-Minded Leadership

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Expectations and Possibilities

Joe D. Batten

**TOUGH-MINDED
MANAGEMENT**

Third Edition

Resource Publications

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Tough-Minded Management
Third Edition
By Batten, Joe D.
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IF I place two pieces of material the same size, shape, and form on an anvil, and one is made of granite, the other of leather, and then hit each with a hammer, what will happen? The granite will shatter into pieces, precisely *because* it is hard. It is rigid, brittle, and weak. The leather is barely dented, precisely because it is *not* hard. It is flexible, malleable, elastic, supple—it is tough.

And this is the quality of *mind* we are talking about here.

THE AUTHOR

Preface

THIS is not a book on principles of management. Nor is it a treatment of management theory. It was written in response to literally thousands of questions and problems encountered both in my work as a manager and a consultant and in seminars throughout the world. I have sought to set forth in it all of the main ingredients needed by the manager of a total organization or major department to generate profits and growth effectively and to achieve other worthwhile objectives in an increasingly competitive world.

The broad spectrum of subject matter was prepared to provide the executive as well as the aspiring executive with perspective, philosophy, and tools. Thousands of top people have expressed a real impatience to present such material to their key personnel in order to achieve a climate compatible with the needs of a fluid and ever shifting world economy. For tough-minded management as discussed here is still at a premium. The sometimes pungent terminology is the language of operating business and is calculated to make some readers wriggle uncomfortably. Some of the thoughts advanced may be new to the reader and require an eager and questing mind to assimilate fully. Some of the changes called for certainly cannot be accomplished in a bland and comfortable way—but the

requirements of modern management are seldom completely comfortable.

The book does not flow in the traditional way, since I have occasionally shifted gears from a department or total organization focus to an international focus. I have done this deliberately: we cannot normally control the variables of operating management in textbook fashion. In short, I fondly hope this book is different—but completely realistic. Only time will tell.

Acknowledgments are always inadequate in a work of this kind, and I owe a profound debt to many people. Three principal sources of inspiration and help must, however, stand out. First, the distilled experience and wisdom of many associates, which were indispensable. Second, the interest of our clients, many of whom have become warm personal friends. Finally, the varied and stimulating experiences made possible by AMA, which is making a truly significant contribution to management throughout the world.

J.D.B., 1969

The years since the original writing of this book in 1963 have spawned a mind-boggling myriad of happenings. Now, more than ever, the times—our global community—cry out above all for management and true leadership.

It is my deep belief that there is no problem facing humanity on this planet that cannot be solved by sufficiently excellent leadership and management.

More than at any other time in history we must commit to optimize the human condition through clearer vision, deeper wisdom, tenacious commitment, self-discipline, and ACTION.

J.D.B., 1978

Foreword

IN his foreword to the original edition of *Tough-Minded Management*, Harry Bullis depicted the challenges to the modern leader and manager in his all-important role as a bulwark of support for our free enterprise system against the onslaught of state socialism. On the effectiveness of his efforts, as Bullis stated, the future progress of humankind depends. There is no doubt that the role ahead for our executive leadership will be a difficult task, albeit one of increased challenge and diversity.

In this revised edition of *Tough-Minded Management* Mr. Batten provides new stimulation to strengthen insights into the opportunities confronting our future business leadership; such insights will enable a manager to effectively lead the individuals placed in his responsibility and the organizations given him to direct.

One must realize that the fundamental theme supporting all of Mr. Batten's writings is the need on the part of every individual to recognize within himself the importance of continuous self-improvement. This carries with it the recognition that an individual cannot expect his personality to influence change on others and on his environment unless he is able to change his own attitudes, objectives, and intentions. The presence of a "learner image" within each

of us is central to the expectation of maximum progressive change within an organization. Potential progressive changes within the organization are depicted with excitement, challenge, and pragmatism. Such an approach, of course, is totally consistent with, and inherent in, Mr. Batten's new, extensively covered idea of "confronting your possibilities."

The "learner image" within a managerial personality allows him to motivate associates and subordinates with the "loving critic" influence expressed by Dr. John Turner (formerly of the Menninger Foundation and now a practicing psychiatrist in San Francisco)—an image identical to that of a good father. Such an image stands in sharp contrast to the uncritical lover or unloving critic, whose characteristics result in ineffective management styles. "Strengths management" and "the management of strengths" are expressions that appear often in the new edition of *Tough-Minded Management*. They are integral to the loving critic image of a leader.

One will recognize in Mr. Batten's new *Tough-Minded Management* important emphasis on the challenges, pitfalls, and promises of the future. It should become apparent that one of the essential qualities of the image of a leader, in addition to those of an effective manager, is an ability to project the excitement of what the future might be.

Mr. Batten's new, mind-stretching insights concerning management by objectives—"MBO—A Living System" will enable leadership to move beyond traditional concepts of Organization Development to a more organismic approach which Mr. Batten has chosen to call "organizational actualization."

Like many of Mr. Batten's previous publications, this edition of *Tough-Minded Management* is a landmark in the understanding of our human institutions and the motivational techniques useful to those who enable the institutions to function.

Donald Alstadt
President & Chief Executive Officer
The Lord Corporation
Erie, Pennsylvania

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I

Where do we go from here?

Management Today

TRADITIONALLY, an examination of management principles, processes, and practices has looked to the past for perspective. Current literature is replete with accounts of the development of scientific management: the contributions of Taylor, Gantt, the Gilbreths, Mayo, and others. Our concern here is with the present and the future.

A bitter indictment of much of modern business is found in William H. Whyte, Jr.'s *The Organization Man*. In contrast, let me say clearly that the succeeding chapters are not intended as any such indictment of business as a whole. I do discuss certain weaknesses in order to point up what is needed. And the first essential ingredient, it seems to me, is vitality. Innovation, creativity, tough-mindedness, and, in the final analysis, end results are not possible without it.

The True Meaning of Vitality

Sheer physical fitness and/or mental sophistication is not enough. These qualities are found in reasonable abundance in business today. A vital awareness of the basic purposes of life, and an awareness of the relationship between these purposes and productive work, are essential.

Are the multitudes of scurrying people with quick obsequious smiles, pliant platitudes, and trite truisms vital? Vitality implies durability and smacks of toughness on the face of it. But just ask typical young management people what their personal goals are. The answers will usually fall into a stereotyped pattern: "I want to feel secure, make a good living, send the kids to college, and take some nice vacations." Or, "I want to make the most money I can, own two cars, have a nice home, and belong to a good club." These quotations are taken out of their total context but are discouragingly descriptive of the main goals of many young executives and, all too often, older ones too. They are seldom aware of the over-all goals or objectives of their organizations, and to an even lesser extent are they able to identify with them.

This apathy, then, is a condition which is not solely a fault of the lower echelons. There are middle and top management people whose lives appear to lack direction, possibly because, for one reason or another, they have lost ambition and interest along the way. More serious, however, for the future of American business is the case of the younger executive. The old saw, "The shortest distance between two points is a straight line," was never more apt than here; plotting this shortest distance presupposes an appropriate goal. People simply cannot fulfill their potential if they lack worthwhile personal goals, and they cannot make the optimum contribution to the company's goals if they fail to know them and identify their own with them—and, consequently, fill their days with bustle and activity for the sake of a paycheck.

This activity and bustle should not be confused with vitality. The vital life is one in which the whole person is challenged. He or she must be called upon by tough-minded top management to *stretch*. He or she must experience a quickening reaction to the results required: results that cannot be realistically set until top management faces up to its primary obligation, which is to determine what the organization is committed to doing and then stretch all its people toward optimum use of their abilities in this direction. The motivational climate, which will be mentioned often (see Chapter 2), is calculated to provide tough-minded management with the philosophy and tools needed to unleash and utilize the vitality that is latent in most organizations.

The Search for Security

It is disturbing to note that the word "security" has become increasingly popular in almost inverse proportion to the increasingly

reluctant use of the word “profit.” We all know of people who have no occasion for financial worries of any kind. How many of these people appear to be really happy with their role in life and their image of themselves?

There are exceptions, of course, but the majority do not have a feeling of real security. Security is about 20 percent financial and 80 percent emotional. What, therefore, does it take to achieve emotional security? Basically, it takes a mature awareness of one’s role in life, of which one’s job normally is a major part, and a knowledge of what to do about it. Rudyard Kipling’s “six honest serving men” have been cited so often by writers on management that I hesitate to introduce them here, but their usefulness in achieving emotional security is obvious:

Know *what* you want and have.

Know *where* you have been and where you want to go.

Know *when* you want to go—have a timetable.

Know *why* you want to go.

Know *how* you will use your own resources and the talents of others.

Know *who* will be involved.

The formula may appear absurdly simple, but it is estimated that, at most, 10 percent of the management people in our country today can readily show evidence of this kind of self-analysis and planning. Personal earnings is *not* the answer to today’s search for security. Self-confidence, self-knowledge, and an awareness of what you stand for will do much to insure it.

Concepts of Personal Dignity

Much has been written in recent years about the need to make the individual employee feel important—feel needed, feel like something other than just a payroll number. What does tough-minded management call for in this area? Is it inconsistent with traditional human relations concepts as applied to the job?

Actually, it involves much more than the belief that employees are stimulated and motivated to greater productivity through “do-gooder” devices. The tough-minded administrator realizes that simply trying to make people feel good by means of service pins, name plates, mentions in the house organ, and other “devices” is not enough. Granted that all people have basic dignity, it follows that

they must have a distinct feeling of both purpose and contribution.

It must be understood further that there is no reason for being on the payroll other than contribution to organization objectives through the accomplishment of departmental and individual objectives. These must be wedded and welded together in a manner that is meaningful to the individual; else his dignity will be impaired. It follows, also, that genuine recognition cannot be accorded an employee if you know and he knows that he is only "busy" and does not make any real contribution to departmental or company objectives.

Many of our faceless "organization men" have become pliant, conforming creatures because of their organization environment. In the absence of real performance yardsticks or criteria, it is often natural to arrive at the conclusion that the path to promotions and raises lies in the direction of ear banging, the collection of status symbols, acquiescent behavior, "sophisticated" parroting of accepted concepts, internal politics, and many other safe courses of action.

Is this personal dignity? The tough-minded executive knows otherwise.

Opportunity—Yesterday and Today

Opportunities for growth, contribution, and true success were never greater than they are today—from both the corporate and the individual viewpoint. New-product development is looked upon all too often as a panacea for sagging sales, seasonal fluctuations, dipping profits, and corporate politics. The mortality rate for newly conceived product ideas is approximately 98 percent, not so often because the basic idea was poor but rather because of poor planning, organization, coordination, motivation, and control of the research, development, production, and marketing efforts. Here, then, is a real focal point for top-level attention and one of the principal reasons for a book on tough-minded management.

What about the individual? What about the many senior and junior executives and non-executives who bewail the lack of personal opportunity in America today? The bald fact is that there are far more big jobs than there are big people. It behooves the little person to become a big person or quit griping. The motivational climate created by tough-minded management makes this kind of growth possible.

Today's executive must be broad-gauge, and this should constitute the finest sort of challenge to the individual emerging from the

shop, or to the college graduate whose training has consisted largely of principles derived from various academic courses. To quote Lawrence A. Appley, former chairman of the American Management Associations: "Management is the development of people, not the direction of things." The full significance of this truth has not registered with many present and aspiring management personnel. The person who wishes to prepare for the broad-gauge top management position must realize that production, marketing, engineering, and financial problems are caused by people and can be solved by people. *Thus an enlightened, tough-minded approach to management requires a thorough knowledge of how to develop and motivate people. Without this, few can qualify for the big assignment.*

The Pursuit of Ease

The Syrian poet Kahlil Gibran has said: "Always you have been told that work is a curse and labor is a misfortune. But I say to you that when you work you fulfill a part of earth's furthest dream, assigned to you when that dream was born, and in keeping yourself in labor you are in truth loving life. And to live life through labor is to be intimate with life's inmost secret."

It is almost a truism that the busy, productive, outgoing mind is the happiest, yet this concept seems to be eluding the majority of contemporary Americans. Listen on a Monday morning to the tales of what happened over the weekend. Note the zest with which most people look forward to vacations. This is healthy and normal. It is not so healthy and normal, however, that so many dread—or pretend to dread—the return to work. Undoubtedly this is a reflection of the desire to conform (when we were youngsters, after all, we never dared say we "loved" school, we "hated" it), but what sort of thinking is it that views time spent on the job as time sacrificed till we can again enjoy ourselves?

It would not appear to be part of God's plan for people simply to tolerate their wage-earning chores. Many sprightly old people in their eighties and nineties have been interviewed and studied to determine the reason for their longevity. A common denominator in these findings is usually the fact that they enjoyed their work, worked hard, and gave freely of themselves.

Clearly, something vital is missing from the typical organizational environment. The will to create, to produce, to mold and build, and, above all, to *give* just isn't there. To repeat: This is abnormal, rather

than normal. We have often heard employees say that they'd like their work, too, if they had a soft touch and a high salary like the company president. Yet research has shown that the average top executive *made* things happen to him instead of waiting for them to happen. He was not preoccupied with security. He reacted to the requirements and privileges of our free enterprise system with individuality, a generous expenditure of midnight oil, and tough-minded follow-through. This is the only way to get there—short of being born the boss's son or daughter—and it can, and should, be fun.

The realization that productive work is one of life's greatest pleasures is not just desirable—it is absolutely essential to the maintenance of our democratic free enterprise system. It is crucial to "get a lot done and have a lot of fun." You can't do much of one without the other.

The Need for Purpose

Life without productive work directed toward some purpose is meaningless, sterile, and messy. Take a look at some counterculture people—those vapid, vacuous, and crushed-looking creatures. The principal things they lack are purpose, insight, and self-discipline.

The two requirements are intertwined. Discipline is needed to look at yourself squarely and define a role, or purpose, in life. Further discipline is needed to face up to your management responsibilities and help your subordinates determine purposes and goals. Delinquent behavior is only one of the current symptoms of life without purpose—of reaction to pressures to conform. The alcoholic, the playboy, and the malcontent are reacting in other ways.

The story has often been told how Wernher von Braun, the great rocket scientist, once flunked a course in mathematics. At that time he had no particular objective but to finish school, but eventually he began to read about rockets and space, decided that this would be his field, and learned how necessary mathematics would be. He then proceeded to take all the mathematics he could in order to reach his target. In the end he discovered a real zest and pleasure in tackling the roughest problems.

It is imperative that we cease to regard work as a means to an end—a chore to be disposed of so we can enjoy ourselves. Productive, results-oriented work should be viewed in its proper perspective as an integrated, essential, and pleasant part of living. Time after

time, people who have reached or are approaching retirement express keen regret at having wasted many productive years in dreams of ease and leisure. They realize belatedly that the opportunity to live richly and fully—to experience the pleasures that can come only with accomplishment—has passed them by.

Leadership Must Be Positive

Motivated people who *want* to work because they know *why* they are working are essential, then, to the successful business—as they are, indeed, to any successful effort. Job Methods Training (JMT), Job Relations Training (JRT), and Job Instruction Training (JIT) all had their inception years ago and served their purpose fully. These courses provided carefully worked out approaches to greater efficiency. They provided uniformity, order, and system. But they were successful primarily because they were taught within the framework of a greater purpose—to defend our country and protect our way of life.

For many years programs in leadership training have proliferated like rabbits. Most of them have not proceeded much beyond JRT, JMT, and JIT. By and large, they leave much to be desired. The manager or supervisor is scheduled for a training session by the boss—so he goes. He is pretty much told that “techniques,” “procedures,” and “methods” are good because they are good. These seldom are clearly related to company, departmental, and personal goals. Hence there is no stretching of the imagination, no pull, no real motivation, nothing for a person to sink his teeth into and walk out with recharged batteries. Is this what it takes to meet the world challenge? The positive leader/manager knows better.

Positive leadership need not be clothed in any complex terms or abstract concepts. Positive leadership, simply defined, means the kind of direction which assumes that the job can be done, the problem solved, and the negative attitudes overcome until proven otherwise.

What of these negative attitudes, particularly in the manager himself? Is there a place for the person who is adept at inserting so-called “realistic” considerations into every new idea or innovation that comes up? Many decisions are made in the name of realism when actually the determining factor is simply an unwillingness to face up to the sacrifices, the hard work and sweat that truly significant achievement requires. In many board rooms and conference

rooms (and in first-line supervision) we have people who invariably argue that a thing can't be done. They are good, many times, at stating the problem or pointing out what's wrong. But, while problem-solving skill is sometimes at a premium, it does not take real imagination, real courage, or, in the final analysis, real ability simply to put one's finger on the spot that's causing the trouble.

The positive leader asks this question often: "All right, now that we know what the problem is, what do we *do* about it?" The positive leader must have confidence; he must believe fundamentally in himself; and this type of deep, sustaining confidence cannot be developed in the classroom or in the management development programs now so popular in many industries. Real courage and self-confidence, in depth, are acquired only by meeting a problem boldly and overcoming it.

The positive leader trusts himself. He knows, following adequate research, what has to be done and does it. He is impatient with people who want only to tell him what the problem is; who simply want to talk about what is wrong. He is sometimes considered almost abrupt and even abrasive in his insistence upon determining what the end results should be and what should, in fact, be done.

True self-confidence is necessarily a product of self-discipline. The person who cannot control his yearnings for leisure and the easy way will seldom feel pleased with what he sees when he examines himself.

Know Yourself

We often see top executives who work themselves into a state of turmoil, frustration, and confusion because their subordinates don't seem able to anticipate their every whim; and what was right yesterday is wrong today. Very often, these executives just don't understand themselves. They have not taken an objective and penetrating inventory of their own personal goals, desires, strengths, and weaknesses; and it is fundamental in attempting to motivate subordinates that superiors must at all times know what they, themselves, actually want.

Here is a real place for tough-minded thinking. The courage to look objectively at yourself, to recognize strengths as well as weaknesses, requires real effort. It's the kind of thing we are tempted to defer. After all, the boss is the boss, and if he is sometimes temperamental and his whims are somewhat irrational, isn't that one of the

prerogatives of top executive assignment? Remember, however, a weakness is only the absence of a strength.

At this point it may be well to distinguish between autocratic behavior and tough-minded performance as advocated in this book. The fallacy that it is the strong, or tough, executive who fires a lot of people, who regularly administers tongue lashings and cutting rebukes, needs to be exploded as the myth it is. What kind of courage is required to call a defenseless subordinate in and dwell at length upon the individual's weaknesses? You have the superior position, the authority; the subordinate has no recourse but to take the abuse without talking back. At the other extreme, obviously, is the manager who cannot face up to the situation when disciplinary action is definitely required.

Although it is sometimes difficult, the most productive path to follow here is to "build on strengths, not focus on weaknesses." This means that you develop increasing proficiency in telling the subordinate what he is capable of and avoid dwelling at any length on what he has not done well. This may not sound tough-minded, but it requires more resourcefulness and skill to use this positive approach than simply to pull rank and elaborate on weaknesses. It has been proved many times that, almost automatically, those areas which have been weak will be taken care of.

In the same way, knowing yourself involves the ability to ferret out and focus on those strengths *you* have and to avoid the comfortable refuge of hiding behind your shortcomings. This may sound backwards. Isn't it true, you argue, that we see much egotistical and conceited behavior in top company executives? Perhaps it is; however, such behavior is seldom displayed by the man or woman who possesses a deep and basic belief in himself or herself. Evidences of conceit or cockiness usually are closely related to personal feelings of inadequacy. The tough-minded manager takes an honest look at both his own and his subordinates' attributes, maximizing the strengths so as to minimize and correct the weaknesses.

Mistakes Within Reason

What about the purported high incidence of ulcers, nervous breakdowns, and heart attacks among executives? The alarming statistics of several years ago have largely been disproved. The capable manager with a strong sense of direction, and with abundant courage, is now considered a good insurance risk.

The corrosive acid nibbling away at the vitals of the troubled executive is almost always some kind of fear. Fear of what? The fear of mistakes in judgment, with the resultant loss of position, job, and material advantages, is a prime offender. Indeed, to make a mistake has become a cardinal sin in many businesses, and this has resulted very directly in the diminution of vitally needed innovation and creativity.

The motivational climate encourages mistakes within reason. It recognizes that ambition and high productivity must result in a certain number of them. It recognizes that the only way to avoid mistakes completely is to do nothing. The Maytag Company, which is consistently regarded as one of the nation's best-run businesses, has laid down a basic managerial philosophy which allows for mistakes in a calculated invitation to innovation and improvement. The wings of the young eagle who never exercises them become ineffectual appendages; ultimately he fears even to attempt to fly.

Imagination and Executive Isolation

There is much current talk about structured interviews, structured group dynamics, structured management. Many executives have sought—and are seeking—a precise, quantitative administrative environment which functions with the inexorable precision of an automated system. This includes a place for everything and everything in its place; clean desk tops and a work day that consists solely of planning and control.

Management of this type does contain some desirable elements but seldom works out in actual practice. It is pretty sterile and antiseptic. The tough-minded manager realizes that a good amount of contact with subordinates is essential to coming to grips with the problems of the business. His imagination, his creativity, and even his daydreams lose much in the process of transmission through memoranda and reports. Imagination, literally, calls for seeing an image of what should be done and breathing action and life into the vaguely seen picture so that it becomes an understandable concept or project. A fertile, creative mind will become dulled without a good bit of day-to-day exposure to other people's experiences, achievements, and foibles.

It follows, therefore, that the tough-minded executive does not create from and administer solely by charts, statistics, memoranda,