

MACH 5

LEADERSHIP

Unimaginable Productivity Gains
By Unleashing Employee Creativity,
Innovation, Motivation and Commitment

Bennet Simonton

All Rights Reserved. Printed in the United States of America. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without written permission from the publisher, except for the inclusion of brief quotations in review.

Copyright 2009 Bennet S. Simonton

ISBN 0-9766748-1-5

Published by Simonton Associates
www.bensimonton.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1 My First 15 Years	7
Chapter 2 Learning More About Superior Support	21
Chapter 3 Applying the New Strategy	37
Chapter 4 Understanding Management and Leadership	71
Chapter 5 Direction	79
Chapter 6 Listening	113
Chapter 7 Group Meetings	143
Chapter 8 In Conclusion	171

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

To Admiral Hyman G. Rickover (deceased)
whose personal courage and demonstrable
respect for people were so inspiring.

To my father, mother and wife who taught me
so much and supported me so consistently

To the many people who worked for me, whose
trials, tribulations and help played such an
important part in developing my skills.

INTRODUCTION

It is not easy to manage people in these very stressful times. The economy has suffered terribly from the sub-prime and credit crunch crisis while executives/managers are being called upon to do much more with much less. Executives and managers are under severe pressure to perform in the face of numerous production/job cuts and fears of more cuts to come. Every group or company wants more engagement by a motivated and committed workforce, including more creativity and innovation even though conditions seem to mitigate against these. The question is how to survive and eventually to grow.

The good news is that in reading this book and in spite of the crisis, you are now just two weeks away from being able to “lead” your people to unleash their full potential of creativity, innovation, productivity, motivation, and commitment. In this condition, they will literally love to come to work and be at least 300% more productive than if poorly motivated. It makes no difference if you are a Chief Executive or a first line supervisor or somewhere in between because the methods for all are the same.

I know that a 300% productivity gain seems like an impossible dream and it was exactly that for me during my first 12 years of managing people. But through a series of events I will relate in this book, that dream became a reality for me. And please believe me when I say I was stunned by the sheer magnitude of what poured forth from my people.

My Background

I have not consulted widely for businesses, have not been a professor of management, and am certainly not a writer. I was a boss for over 30 years, a manager of people, as few as 22 and as many as 1300 people. In those years, I made all the errors and experienced all

the problems and frustrations that any boss encounters when dealing with juniors, peers and bosses.

I am a graduate of the United States Naval Academy and my management training began there. For the first year, hazing designed to change us from being civilians and rebuild us as military stressed me both mentally and physically. After a rest my sophomore year, as a junior and senior midshipman it was my job to indoctrinate freshmen using the same authoritarian approach I had been subjected to my first year. This hands-on, two year apprenticeship dictated my management style for the next 12 years.

I served in line positions on eight surface ships for 20 years, 15 of which were in directing the operation and maintenance of naval nuclear propulsion plants. Five of those 20 years were as a surface ship Commanding Officer, first of a destroyer escort and later of a nuclear-powered cruiser. I had one year of training ashore in nuclear propulsion and another one and a quarter years gaining a masters degree in Computer Systems Management. My last 2 1/2 years were spent as a member of the Navy's Pentagon Staff helping to direct about \$3.5B annually for the research, development, acquisition and lifecycle support of all surface ship weapons systems.

I retired from the Navy and went to work for an electric utility company, as the plant manager of a large electric generating station for 2 ½ years. After that, I spent seven years as the executive in charge of a 1000+ person unionized group responsible for overhauling boilers, turbines and major auxiliary machinery of the utility's fossil and nuclear electric and steam generating stations.

What Gives Me The Right To Write This Book?

Through 14 different jobs working for 28 different bosses, I was always managing people, as few as 22 and as many as 1300. I was also always attempting to effectively manage the full gamut of "things", from very technical "things" such as nuclear reactors and commercial electricity generation machinery, to mundane "things" such as chipping paint and cleaning bathrooms. While I have certainly

made every error known to man and have seen them repeated many more times by seniors, juniors and peers, this is no different than what any boss experiences over time.

So getting things done through people has been the focus of my entire working life, from the Naval Academy to present. For my first 12 years, I managed people by using a form of the traditional top-down command and control model, the one I was thoroughly indoctrinated in at the Naval Academy. During those 12 years, though my bosses thought I was doing a great job, I realize now that I could have done a lot better both for my organization and for my people, but only my people knew it.

After my first 12 years, I started to modify my top-down methods and the more modifications I made the better my people performed. This began by truly listening to my people. And the more I listened and responded appropriately to what I heard, the more they enlightened me about what they needed in order to do a better job. They eventually became willing to tell me exactly how they reacted to managerial actions.

In order to further improve my skills, I read, studied, developed and tested various techniques to manage my people, over and over and over again, day in and day out. I had the obvious advantage of having a ready-made test laboratory. In my attempts to understand people, I studied history, religions, psychology, psychiatry and generally whatever man has wrought. For many years, I read every book I could find on management and leadership. In short, I did a great deal of searching for answers and testing of those found worthy.

Slowly but surely, I came to realize that managing or leading people is not an art, but a science, actually a rather exact science. My studies were valuable, but it was observations of and listening to many different subordinates over many years that allowed me to discover a set of human characteristics relevant to managing. I learned that these human characteristics cause people, all people, to react in predictable ways to actions by managers.

So as a manager, I was able to prove in daily practice what I came to realize was a full set of natural laws governing human behavior and thus managerial actions. Performance suffered when my actions or those of any other manager violated one or more of these laws and soared when I was able to comply with them all.

With full compliance, I experienced the sheer joy and personal satisfaction of knowing that the vast majority of my subordinates could be trusted to perform in superstar fashion 24/7 and that they were also very proud and very happy to come to work each day. As a group, these superstars were literally able to blow away competitors. I found that the power to make this come true lies within the grasp of every manager, almost regardless of level.

Acknowledgements

I want to acknowledge two men without whose influence I would not have been able to achieve these breakthroughs:

1- my father who demonstrated a firm belief that our Creator was a good guy who had made everything good, each good being synergistic with every other good. So if I had a solution to a problem that was not good for everything, he contended I should keep searching for our Creator's solution, the one that was good for all. In addition, though he admitted I could be proficient at a technical endeavor at a young age, he said that I would not be able to develop true understanding of people without many years of experience. He was right on all counts.

2- a great man, Admiral Hyman G. Rickover, father of the nuclear Navy, who demonstrated many times over that technical and operational excellence can be achieved through superior training and having a consistent set of straight-forward, easy to understand rules and values for people to follow.

WARNING

This book addresses only one of the two major areas in which any boss must be highly proficient, that being the management of

people. The other area consists of the technical aspects associated with your chosen vocation or profession, whether it is construction of buildings, producing or selling products, providing financial services, marketing, or whatever. I'll refer to this second area as "things".

Achieving high proficiency in the technical area of "things" may require a significantly greater effort to master than that required to correctly manage people (certainly my area of nuclear power was one of these). My point is that both requirements must be satisfied. If you lack technical proficiency, you won't be able to understand what your people need to do a better job or be able to help them to achieve excellence. Fortunately, once you gain the ability to understand one or more highly technical "things", understanding a new one is relatively easy.

My Goal In Writing This Book

I have been enjoyed many blessings in my life, blessings provided to me by many diverse people spread over all the years including the past. I owe to them a debt that can only be paid through contributing to those who come after me. This book is my attempt to make a small payment for the many, many good things I have received from those people and my country.

In addition, I believe most managers use some form of the traditional top-down command and control approach to managing people, just as I did. From my own experiences, I know that top-down leaves untapped a very large amount of human potential. I also know that from poorly motivated people to highly motivated people, the change in terms of productivity per person is north of 300%.

I also know that going against traditional wisdom, the top-down command and control approach to managing people, is not an easy thing to do, especially since it has been ingrained in us since birth and most managers use some form of it. So my goal is to provide enough compelling reasons to convince the reader that a far superior alternative to the top-down command and control approach to

managing people exists and that it consists of the easy-to-understand and easy-to-use tools I will provide in this book.

Although it took me years to develop these skills and the knowledge behind them, any person equipped with the knowledge of this book can immediately begin to unleash the full potential of their employees. The change can be effected for a small group in a few weeks and in a large group in a number of months.

So my goal is to help executives and managers make the same transition I made. Making this change will enable any executive or manager to unleash the huge amount of natural capability existing in their workforce. This could be termed change management at its best since it creates a workforce that enjoys change and readily embraces those changes necessary to excel in a difficult and financially challenging global marketplace.

This change is so huge, that I chose to title the book

“MACH 5 LEADERSHIP”

“Mach 5” means 5 times the speed of sound, something unimaginable for the average human being. Since the leadership described in this book unleashes an unimaginably high level of employee performance, the title “Mach 5 Leadership” seemed entirely appropriate.

The book

In the first three chapters, I will provide a historical narrative of how I managed people, why I changed, the characteristics of those changes, and the results of those changes from the beginning of my 30+ years of managing people to the end. The last five chapters provide details of the concepts and techniques necessary to achieve the goal of becoming an exceptional manager of people.

CHAPTER ONE

My First 15 Years

When thinking back on my 34 years of managing people, I always need plenty of humor to boost my morale because I made all the mistakes one can make, some of them many, many times. Most of the time I did not even suspect that I was making an error. But now I know that I unnecessarily and through ignorance caused the people who worked for me a large amount of stress, anxiety, unhappiness and other equally bad things such as low productivity.

The good news is that after doing many things wrong for about 12 years, mostly from using a form of the traditional top-down command and control approach to managing people, I changed my ways and learned how to correct the vast majority of my errors. In the process, I caused my people to love to come to work and to excel well beyond anyone's dreams including my own. As a result, I was able to turn four separate management disasters into islands of true excellence.

I will herewith relate the steps I took to significantly improve my skills of managing people and in so doing hopefully provide you what you need to do likewise. There's no rocket science involved, just lots of common sense.

First, let's understand the GOAL

Before I begin to relate what I did as a manager and how I learned from my experiences, let's look at what I have come to believe is the goal of managing people. It is important that the reader understand this goal since the journey I will relate in this book moved me inexorably toward this goal even though I did not realize it for much of the journey.

"Managing" simply means to make effective use of resources and functions to achieve organizational success. Managers thus manage resources such as money, machines, and people. They

also manage functions that utilize these resources such as production, supply chain, engineering, and construction. So people are just one of several resources and getting the most out of each is the manager's job.

Each resource and function has characteristics that dictate, repeat dictate, how they should be most effectively managed. Failure to understand the characteristics of any resource or function causes the manager to fail to make effective use of that resource or function.

In the case of managing people, each person has a natural store of creativity, innovation, productivity, motivation and commitment. Some have more and some have less of each, possibly less creativity but far more motivation for instance. The amount in each person is unknown until it is unleashed in its entirety.

If a manager can manage employees in such a way to unleash this mother lode of capabilities on the work, performance will soar and the company will benefit greatly from being able to beat their competition hands down. An expert in this field, Stephen R. Covey, wrote that gains in human performance of 500% per person are possible. My own experiences support this view. I can add that unleashing this mother lode of capabilities not only increases performance but causes morale to be sky high and people literally love to come to work. And since creativity, innovation, productivity, motivation, and commitment all emanate from the brain, what we want is 100% of each employee's brainpower to be applied to their work.

Unleashing this mother lode of capabilities is in my humble opinion the real goal of managing people.

Please keep this in mind as we proceed since it serves to explain what I did.

My first 12 years as a manager

In retrospect, the traditional top-down command and control approach was the method I used for my first 12 years managing my people. An authoritarian based society of parents, teachers, churches, government and bosses had subjected me to this approach and demonstrated it to me for my entire upbringing.

The Naval Academy had started my formal indoctrination by forcing me to take the orders of upperclassmen. When my performance did not please them, I suffered consequences and suffering was a part of the indoctrination.

In my second year, I got a rest from this process and only watched as the juniors and seniors did the forcing and the meting out of consequences. In my last two years, I became one of those doing the ordering and punishing of the first year midshipmen as a part of their indoctrination. With two years of reasonably intense practice, I became quite proficient at using the top-down approach to managing people.

When I graduated and was commissioned as an officer, I like everyone else took an oath to uphold the Constitution against all enemies foreign and domestic and to follow the orders of the officers appointed over me, so help me God.

I viewed my job as ensuring that my people performed at the highest possible level and I was very aggressive in attempting to meet that responsibility. I decided what needed to be done and gave the necessary orders to get it done. I viewed my people as supporting me so that I could meet my responsibilities and get done what needed to be done.

I learned early on that if I did not follow up to ensure that work was done, it may not be done or might be done at low quality. I also learned that there were people who could not be trusted and I tried to force them to change by presenting them with consequences much as I did at the Naval Academy. So a big part of my job was to discover what was not being done or not done properly and take action to correct that deficiency. I was quick to dish out consequences to repeat offenders or anyone I believed did not care about the quality of their work.

I was dedicated to succeeding. And being naturally aggressive and willing to put in whatever hours it took, I became quite successful at achieving relative excellence while other officers achieved less or even much worse results.

In my first assignment after graduation, my boss who was in charge of the engineering department of my ship, a destroyer, was fired because the propulsion plant was a disaster, barely capable of operating. In races with the other seven ships in the squadron, my ship would quickly fall far behind. Department members were demoralized and walked around with their heads down being the laughing stock of the ship.

The Captain of the ship assigned me to take over. With a large amount of effort by everyone in the department as directed by me, we turned that around in a few months and the department became a group of high achievers very proud of their accomplishments. After this “fix”, we won every race against other ships hands down. This experience was unique since the other ships I served on during my first 11 years were well managed.

But because of this kind of performance, on this ship and others over a period of 11 years, I was highly ranked by my commanding officers in annual evaluations. The result was that I was promoted faster than most and was selected for the most important jobs.

Dissatisfied With How I Was Managing People

I immensely enjoyed my first 11 years and duty on five different ships. In fact, I loved going to sea and the challenges it presented. I did not run into another situation like the one on my first ship and served with some really terrific officers and enlisted. But I truly believed I could do better in terms of how I managed my people.

I knew that my best people loved to work for me and felt like they were fully supported. Performing at a high level meant that I allowed them full reign as long as they kept me informed of what they were doing so I could add my knowledge to whatever they were doing when appropriate.

However, I also knew the middle level performers and especially those lower did not like working for me. Many of them were scared of me and had low morale, but I knew high morale was extremely important to achieving excellence. Besides, the difference between the performance of the top and the bottom was quite large. I believed there should be a way for me to close that gap significantly, even to the point of having the vast majority attain a high level of excellence.

In an attempt to close this gap, I had been reading many management and leadership books, but found their advice to be of little help. They presented lots of glorious “whats” such as “inspire your people” or “motivate them” or “be a leader”. But they never provided precisely how to do this or the reasons why one approach would be better than another.

The Copernican Theory, A Revelation

After my first 12 years of naval service, including a one-year training program to qualify in the operation of nuclear propulsion plants, I went back to school to get a masters degree in computers. While there, I continued my search for better ways to manage people. Miraculously, I stumbled upon a very thick book of organizational studies written by a group of Harvard organizational researchers. Their major conclusion was what I will refer to as the Copernican Theory.

This theory held that the workforce was the sun and I was the earth rotating around them. This theory postulated that an organization was only as good as what the workforce produced. It also contended that without their heat and energy I as manager would die, and that if I treated the workforce as if they were very important, their performance would improve significantly.

This theory implied that the employees do the only useful work, what the organization produces, and that the boss has a support role of providing whatever employees need in order to do the work. What a change for me! For 12 years I had considered that my subordinates supported me. I had even produced a canned spiel I

used to explain that belief to my people so that they would understand their role.

Finally, in a moment of honest reflection, I had to admit that I did not do the work and that my job was to provide my people with whatever they needed to do the work. I also had to admit that direction was only one of many different support functions I was responsible to provide even though I had been spending almost all my time on direction. I was always figuring out my next order and trying to catch someone doing something wrong so I could give more orders. I had not been concentrating on providing better support, meaning better training, tools, discipline, procedures, policies, rules, direction, material, parts, technical advice, information, documentation, planning, etc. And although I had spent most of my time giving orders, I also had to admit that I had never truly examined what “better direction” would be.

Most importantly, I had to admit that if my people were doing the only useful work while I only provided support to them, then they were much more important than I to the achievement of organizational excellence.

This was a big change in my thinking, a real revelation.

If these people were so important, why had I never taken the time to really listen to them? Why had I treated them almost as if they should “shut up and listen” and then carry out my orders?

And there were other considerations beyond the Copernican Theory relevant to how I should treat my people. The most noteworthy were “do unto others as you wish them to do unto you” and “love your neighbor”, two universal principles I had known for years I should practice. But in the workplace, who were my neighbors and what was love?

It proved difficult for me to accept that my bosses and my subordinates were my neighbors. And once I did, figuring out what actions I should take to “do unto others as I would wish them to do unto me” was not a simple task since I still had to be the boss. It was, however, clear to me that listening to my people would be a big step toward meeting this responsibility.

In addition, I was most fortunate to have a wife who treated both her children and her acquaintances with real love, especially those in need of help. I cannot express how greatly her example aided me in slowly but surely developing the actions of this book and eventually treating my people the way they deserved.

The upshot of all this was that I committed to start listening, really listening to these very important people and “doing unto others as I wish they would do unto me”.

Listening provided the performance breakthrough I sought.

After gaining my masters degree, I took over as Commanding Officer of a destroyer escort with a crew of about 250. This ship had serious problems, a real basket case greatly in need of a turnaround. Equipped with my new viewpoint or mindset, I began listening to my crew, to their complaints, suggestions and questions.

I found that most of their complaints and suggestions had merit and most of them concerned the support it was my responsibility to provide, support such as training, tools, discipline, procedures, policies, rules, direction, material, parts, technical advice, information, documentation, and planning. I set about resolving those complaints and suggestions as fast as I could. I also answered their questions as forthrightly as I knew how, no holds barred and very respectfully. This seemed to be the only reasonable path given their VIP status.

Amazingly, the more I fixed and improved my support, the better they performed their work, almost in lockstep. Wow!

I listened both one-on-one and in group meetings, usually about 40-50 people at each meeting. I found both to be valuable especially once I realized that people would say things one-on-one that they would never say in a group and vice versa. In addition, I learned that saying something in front of 40 people was far more powerful and far more credible than if I said the same thing to only one person. In one-on-one interactions, the person would quite obviously wonder if there was anything behind my words. But in

front of 40 people, most of the audience concluded that I must really mean what I was saying. Eventually, I estimated that I was 200 times more effective in front of 40 people than presenting the same things to one person because I estimated my credibility with a 40 person group to be 5 times greater ($5 \times 40 = 200$).

Group meetings proved to be a very powerful mechanism. I concluded that without them I would not have been able to change the culture of a relatively large group.

When I first arrived onboard this destroyer escort, I heard that the crew thought no one cared about them. After eight months of listening and responding to their complaints, suggestions and questions in a very timely and positive way, I heard something different. They then considered themselves to be highly valued by their officers. So I learned that providing very high quality support was interpreted by my people as caring about them and the more I openly showed I cared about them, the more they showed care about their work.

In addition, the more I admitted to errors in my support of them, the more they admitted to their own errors and the more they were willing to fix those errors. And the more open I was to them, the more open they were with me.

Did I say being open? Did that mean being forthright and not playing my cards close to my vest? How open was I willing to be?

For example, when people complained and claimed we had denied a promotion because the man was black, we made a full public disclosure. Investigation revealed the denial was fair and appropriate in view of the man's performance. The man denied promotion, however, had convinced quite a few crew members that the officers had discriminated against him in this and in other ways such as not selling hair treatments in the ship's store appropriate for blacks.

After investigation, we corrected several valid complaints and then held a meeting to address the promotion issue with 8 interested crew members, including the complainant. We provided

each with copies from the man's service record documenting his poor work performance and other reasons why he was denied promotion. Reading these, the group quickly realized that there were more than enough reasons for not promoting the man. I was only willing to expose his service record because the man himself had made the issue public and had painted himself as someone he was not. As a result of this exposure (openness), the issue disappeared.

From that experience and a host of others, I learned that providing everything they want to know when they want to know it is essential to gaining the trust and commitment of the workforce. This included informing them of business considerations that could affect future decisions.

Not doing so or waiting to tell them until the need for a decision was upon me always proved to be a formula for disaster because ignorance created mistrust and thus excuses for poor performance. In addition, it turned out that being completely open was the only way I could prove to my people I really did believe they were at least as important as I if not more important.

Quality Of Responses

I also learned the hard way that doing a first class, high quality job of handling a single complaint, suggestion or question was far more important than doing less than a first class job with two or more. There appeared to be two reasons for this. First because high quality was greatly appreciated and second because it served as an outstanding example to everyone of how work should be done. I found people saying "if the captain can do his best for us, why can't we do our best for him?" This I eventually realized was the epitome of superior leadership and it led my people to go out of their way to make things better, in ways that I could never have dreamed.

Quality included getting back to the originator before implementation with the proposed action and gaining concurrence for that action. If anyone objected to the proposed action, I made a trip back to the drawing board. For cases involving the correction of support deficiencies, quality also included a clear admission that it was my error and after a while I learned to provide appropriate,

sincere apologies to those who had suffered from my poor support. Originators really appreciated these apologies and paid back with not only better performance, but also by admitting to their own errors and showing a willingness to fix them.

So my rule became to learn what high quality was and how precisely to achieve it before attempting to increase the number of support deficiencies undertaken for correction.

Learning About Human Characteristics

Through all this listening and I mean really listening and often asking questions to learn everything the person knew or felt, I learned a lot about what makes people tick. I learned that their hopes, fears, cares and woes weren't basically any different than mine. I also learned that all people share other characteristics of great significance to the science of managing people.

Needs

Slowly but surely, my people told me how they wanted to be heard and be able to put in their own "two cents". Their stories of how stressed, unable to care about their work, and even apathetic they became when they were unable to put in their "two cents" convinced me of the great importance of meeting this basic need.

Besides, since it was also very important to me that I "do unto others as I would have them do unto me", allowing them to voice their ideas and opinions was the only way to do this. I found that ensuring they could do this whenever they wanted, no matter what it was, achieved the most positive results on performance. Fearing that they would misuse this right turned out to be baseless because once they realized I would always listen, they went out of their way not to misuse it. The exceptions proved to be insignificant.

Additionally, my people made clear that they dearly wanted to be respected. By trial and error, I learned that treating them with great respect in reacting to their complaints, suggestions and questions was a major factor in meeting this need, but there were

other ways. Training and coaching which made them highly professional and proficient in doing their work was equally important and greatly valued by employees. And of course, allowing them to control their work and be responsible for it rather than ordering them around like robots was a large factor in showing them respect. I found the correct rule was “treat them like they are valuable to the organization and they will become valuable to the organization”.

It became apparent to me that the level of respect I showed them dictated the quality of their work performance. Eventually, I realized that there was an entire spectrum from unfulfilled to completely fulfilled needs, from total disrespect to total respect and from never being heard to being heard whenever desired. And the level of employee performance turned out to be directly proportional to the level of fulfillment of these two needs. So treating many people like robots, as I had too often done in my first 12 years, caused them to perform at a very low level and thus made me my own worst enemy.

So the better I met the requirement of “do unto others as I wish they would do unto me”, the better they performed.

Excuses

Listening to how my people felt also revealed that they could excuse their own poor performance by using the poor performance of one of their bosses or some senior leader. This was a “if he can do it so can I” way to justify their own mistakes. If I supplied low quality tools, this could be used to “excuse” some poor performance of their own. If in their opinion I did not appear to care about them, they could use that as an “excuse” in the “if the boss doesn’t care about me, why should I care about the work?” mode.

Many of these excuses came from events that occurred well in the past. But most of them came from the quality or lack thereof of the support it was my responsibility to provide. I soon learned that raising the quality of my support to where every bit of it met very high standards of all values was the only sure way to make all these excuses disappear.

Values

The more I listened, the more I realized that everyone believed in the very same good values and also believed that their opposites were bad. This applied to every value such as honesty versus dishonesty, humility v arrogance, respect v disrespect, knowledge v ignorance, fairness v unfairness, caring v uncaring, industriousness v indolence, and so on for all the values common to humans.

The only difference I could detect was that one person could have a high standard for a particular value while the next person might have a low one. I began viewing value standards as a spectrum from minus 10 to plus 10 such as from total hate to total love or totally unfair to totally fair. I learned that one person's experiences led them to believe that love was very valuable so that person's own standard might be a +8. Another person who had experienced very little love might have a standard of +3.

This difference resulted in different reactions to events evidencing love. For example, an event showing a standard of +5 for love would be greatly respected by the "+3" person while the "+8" person would disrespect it because it fell below their standard.

In addition, I found that the totality of these "differences" and their effects on behavior were what made every person unique from every other person. But while these "differences" explained why reactions to events were different, they did not affect what I needed to do as a manager of people. I eventually proved that in spite of these differences, if I made my support for these diverse people reflect a plus 8 to 10 standard for every value, every person would respect me and be led to a level of excellence far beyond what is normally considered possible.

Meeting the highest possible standards in every endeavor, whether that is for efficiency, quality, cost, speed, reliability, capability, or any number of other characteristics/values, is a sure way to success. In retrospect, I owe much of my own success as a manager to the Copernican Theory (with me revolving around my people rather than vice versa) and the mindset it gave me.

- *First, it led me to respectfully listen to and respond to the complaints, suggestions and questions of my people on a continuing basis.*
- *Second, because of treating them with respect my people became willing to tell me when I or we had not met a high enough standard thus enabling me to raise the quality of every element of my support and thus of their output as well.*
- *Third, I had no special knowledge of value standards, but learned quickly as one or more of my people would complain about something reflecting too low a standard or suggest a higher one. All I had to do was treat their input with respect, as the gift it truly was, and not be defensive or take their criticisms personally.*
- *Fourth, as I focused on satisfying and meeting the highest standard any of my people might have, I eventually became able to detect standards below +8 with little thought, almost automatically. Once I gained this experience, I was able to play my proper role of protecting high standards by helping everyone to achieve real excellence.*

This understanding of people's values left me with one big question.

If every person believes in the same good values and that their opposites are bad, why is their behavior often at odds with their values, sometimes even reflecting a negative standard? Actually, I found that people would defend their sub-standard behavior as being justified. You figure!

The Outcome Of My Assignment As Commanding Officer

The result of this listening was that as I admitted to my errors in providing support to the crew and corrected them to their satisfaction, they improved their performance – in retrospect almost

in lock step. In fact, in 18 months the ship went from being a basket case to being a superstar able to compete with if not out-compete the very best. The crew became a very proud, happy, highly professional group capable of superior performance in every way, even proving their superiority in direct competition with similarly equipped ships.

So it turned out that using the Copernican Theory as my guide resulted in a far greater gain than I had thought possible. I learned that on average, my people could be at least twice as productive or capable than I had thought possible in my first 12 years of managing. My very best performers did not improve much (how could they already being at excellence), but those lower down made significant performance gains. Besides, almost no one had a sense of fear and morale was very high.

A “House of Cards”

When I was relieved of my command by a replacement and left to take a new assignment, many crew members cried. They apparently had good reason because my relief returned the ship to being a basket case in less time than it took me to fix it. That really hurt.

The question for me was why had I created a “house of cards” that would fold so quickly? Wasn’t there a way I could do better?

These and the question of why people’s behavior did not match their values nagged me over the coming years and spurred me to continue searching for knowledge that would lead to solutions.

Read on for the solutions!

