INTRODUCTION

Over the last decade more and more attention has been paid, at meetings of managers and supervisors, to the problems associated with manpower utilization and management. Not too many years ago a highway superintendents' conference or a road school would have built a program almost exclusively around the problems dealing with the latest equipment, materials, and road engineering technology. No doubt, during informal discussions between sessions, over cups of coffee, or whatever highway superintendents imbibe, some attention used to be paid to municipal, county, state, and federal politics—mainly on the question of where the money is coming from and how can we get more of it for roads.

It was assumed that wages alone would influence the quantity and quality of work performance. Increasingly, it has become evident that the problems of workers and managing work have assumed considerable importance.

EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

Instead of the title of “Problems of Managing Workers,” a more suitable title might have been “Managing Work to Achieve Employee Motivation.” This would identify problems with work and work structures and not exclusively with workers. The goals and objectives of any work organization are to get goods and services to clients. How the work gets done, is in the final analysis, dependent on the quantity and quality of effort the worker determines to give to his job—not only when the boss is looking over his shoulder, but also when the boss is not there. How much he is prepared and willing to put out—in other words—to what degree he is motivated, raises an important question. Can people be motivated—can they be managed? According to my definition of motivation, the responses to these questions are negative. To be sure, in some instances coercion can cause an employee to jump to a task and perform it. The classical foreman, “The Bull of the Woods,” used to operate that way. The emotional cost and the
financial cost of such supervision has proved to be extremely high, although not always evident. Theory and current practice support the assumption that when a supervisor provides conditions in which employees are self-motivated, job satisfaction and improved performance are more likely to follow. Workers under right conditions are capable of performing work which will satisfy their needs for safety, self-respect, and the respect of others. Under this assumption the job of the manager and supervisor is to manage work and provide work conditions in a manner that is most conducive to employee self-motivation. This means the establishment of conditions in which the worker, properly selected, effectively trained, fairly remunerated, and recognized as an integral part of the work effort is given the conditions under which he will manage himself.

For those who are interested in finding the theoretical sources for these assumptions I would recommend two books by Douglas McGregor, "The Human Side of Enterprise," and "The Professional Manager." Other books also deal with some of the emerging data about human behavior and its implications for modern work situations, but McGregor is a good starting point. His emphasis is on the fact that the manager must look at his job in today's terms and forego the traditional assumptions on which many of our supervisory practices have been based. On this basis we need to view the managerial job in an entirely new light, and to take into account some of the changes which have shaped work and have influenced the attitudes and behavior of workers towards their jobs.

MANAGEMENT MORE COMPLEX

Technology has influenced equipment, materials, and engineering in road construction and maintenance. There is also the matter of community demand for more and better highways on which citizens expect to travel. Highway safety imposes more stringent requirements which are reflected in quantity and quality of the tasks which need to be performed. Suffice it to say that the work highway engineers and supervisors must manager has expanded and has become much more sophisticated and exacting.

While these changes have been in process, the character of the labor market has also been transformed. By and large, the market for workers has become tighter; there is greater competition for the skills that are available. Competition for skills has made for higher wage expectations and demands. The younger entrants into the work force are better educated. They can choose from among a variety of jobs
which they can learn to perform. They have a wider choice from which to seek job satisfaction. Furthermore, employees in the public sector have taken a leaf from the industrial book and are seeking their rights through union organization and collective bargaining procedures.

All of this taken together can lead only to the conclusion that management and supervision have become more complex and can be expected to increase the complexity over time. Work has become more demanding and supervisors must go beyond their technology to learn about modern work management. There must be less preoccupation and reliance on traditional coercive managing techniques, which are largely based on work values harking back to the 1930's, the depression and earlier. The modern manager must learn more about the essential components of the modern manager's job.

COMPONENTS OF THE MANAGER'S JOB

One way to look at the job is to set up a structure of elements which are interrelated, and yet which can be seen separately for purposes of emphasis and study. The diagram which follows places these elements into focus. By visualizing the job components one can recognize the various skills and areas of knowledge required to perform the supervisory function.

MANAGERIAL OR SUPERVISORY JOB

*GOAL—To get product or service to customer*

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As the diagram indicates, the purpose and function of a job is to get a product or service to the customer. At any organizational level the supervisor, by performing a combination of actions, translates the performance of subordinates into meaningful accomplishment. The highway superintendent plans, organizes, directs, coordinates, and controls a group of subordinate supervisors to achieve the overall charter of the road department. The charter represents the goals and objectives of the organization. In turn, each supervisor has a more limited charter in which he plans, organizes, directs, coordinates, and controls
that function or series of functions which has been delegated to him. He does this with the people who are assigned to him. In other words, within the scope of the particular job, the manager or supervisor is responsible for performing assigned duties, tasks, and responsibilities.

THE TECHNICAL COMPONENT

Supervisor—Making roads and highways available and maintaining them, within a budget structure.

Foreman—1. Garage—maintaining trucks and equipment.
2. Road repairs.
3. Snow and ice removal.
4. Supervising the operation of road equipment, etc.
5. Etc., etc.

Hourly Employee—Driving a truck, operating a bulldozer or other equipment, cutting and trimming trees, etc.

It is evident that all the workers in the organization, including managers and supervisors, are clearly engaged in the processes associated with completing the technical component efficiently and satisfactorily. If the technical component from beginning to end were small enough that it could be done by one person then the jobs of supervision and management would be superfluous. But in a complex organization a number of people are required to perform a variety of tasks and duties. In turn this has created additional tasks, duties, and responsibilities which need to be carried out by managers and supervisors, their number and nature depending on the kind of technical end to be achieved and the scale of the organization. In other words, the manager and supervisor also have jobs as workers do. Job here is defined as a series of duties, tasks, and responsibilities, which in combination make up the assignment of an individual. What is the respect in which the managerial job differs from that of the manual or clerical worker? What are the tasks which constitute the administration component of the managerial job?

THE ADMINISTRATIVE COMPONENT

From classical organization theory we draw these basic elements—planning, organizing, directing, coordinating, and controlling. Together they represent the work which managers are expected to perform.

Planning

1. Identifying the elements in the technical component which need to be performed.
2. Establishing priorities with respect to their completion.
3. Establishing standards of quality, quantity, and time for satisfactory completion.
4. Setting time and completion targets.
5. Establishing financial and budgetary targets.
6. Providing for the acquisition of equipment.
7. Determining quality and quantity of materials to be ordered.
8. Providing for material storage and ready availability.
9. Being prepared to change or modify plans.

**Organizing**

1. Providing the manpower staffing—selection on the basis of quantity and manpower required.
2. Distribution of work to be performed—dividing tasks to be performed.
3. Delegating assignments to subordinates.

**Directing**

1. Instructing subordinate employees—informal and formal.
2. Making clear work assignments—communicating—providing feedback opportunity to insure that communication is understood.
3. Discussing work problems with subordinates—providing for their participation in determining how work can best be done.
5. Restructuring subordinate jobs as skills improve, or as work load changes, or as changed conditions dictate.

**Coordinating**

1. Mediating between you, boss and your subordinates.
2. Clarifying the respective roles and functions of the subordinate groups.
3. Reconciling organization plans with outside groups—vendors, maintenance agencies, regulatory agencies, etc.
4. Providing for the availability of equipment and materials according to plan.

**Controlling**

1. Checking work performed against plan targets—time and quality.
2. Determining the changes in plans needed when targets are not met for whatever reasons.
3. In the main—checking work progress against plans and taking appropriate planning, organizing, directing and coordinating actions.

4. Reporting status of progress to boss and subordinates.

Within the scope of his job, these are samples of duties, tasks and responsibilities which the supervisor or manager is expected to perform. To a degree they can be designated as mental skills compared to the physical skills which completion of the technical components demands on the part of other workers. Which of the elements of the administrative component is most important? Can one be performed and another neglected? They are so closely integrated that one is dependent upon the other and in a sense are ongoing, simultaneous requirements of the job. Together they represent the manager’s role.

Here we might ask whether the highway superintendent and the road maintenance foreman in performing their respective jobs do the same thing. Earlier we included a phrase—"within the scope of his job." In an organization in which the work structure is specialized and separate functions are delegated to subordinate supervisors, the top manager plans, organizes, directs, coordinates, and controls the overall work process, and if he has done this well and has delegated functions properly, the subordinate supervisors plan, organize, direct, coordinate, and control work in the structure which is within the scope of their individual charters. A substantial volume of managerial problems grow out of failure to delegate and assign responsibility effectively to those who in turn are expected to get their tasks performed.

The administrative component of the managerial job is concerned with the actions taken to achieve performance of the technical component by people. If subordinate workers were not needed, administration as described here would be unnecessary. Mainly, administration is what we do so that people get the job completed. The manager must be skilled and knowledgeable about the materials, equipment, and technology of the work for which he is responsible. He must have skill and knowledge to plan, organize, direct, coordinate, control, and then in the total context he must become familiar with the unique elements constituting the people component of his total job.

PEOPLE COMPONENT

This brings us to the crucial area of knowledge, understanding, and skills that are most critical in the performance of the managerial job. The manager should know as much about the people component of his total responsibility as he does about materials and equipment. In
fact, the initial knowledge he must deal with is his own behavior and value system—how what he does can affect the attitudes and values of those he supervises. Much too frequently we assume that the people who work for us should bend themselves to our desires and expectations. In today's environment and labor market this is not likely to happen. There is always the possibility that the worker may know more than his boss and continued reluctance to give his ideas a trial will minimize his motivation and desire to contribute to the effectiveness of the work team. So it seems evident that a manager must learn about his own motives and reasons for behavior as much as he needs to learn about the behavior of people generally.

Some of the areas of knowledge and human relations skill that are essential for the manager are:

1. In what respects are people the same—in what respects are they different?
2. Do people react the same as individuals as they do as members of a group?
3. What are some of the psychological and sociological factors which influence behavior? Inherited or acquired characteristics?
4. What motivates behavior at the work place? How important is the structure of work as compared to individual personality factors?
5. What do we know at this time about establishing work conditions conducive to worker motivation?
6. What can the manager do to manipulate the work structure to take advantage of the varied human resources available to him?
7. What does the manager need to learn about interviewing, instructing, appraising performance, recognizing and rewarding superior performance, and other skills normally called personnel management skills?

The questions suggested here are not the ones we usually ask ourselves in our excessive preoccupation with employee problems. More frequently we ask, when something goes wrong, "Who is to blame?" To get the answer may give a certain amount of satisfaction, unless, of course, the answer leads back to the boss and his failure to have done his job adequately. A knowledge of human behavior tends to make us look at and do something to influence the situational factors which bear on personality and work performance.

One would be remiss if he left the impression that a volume of hard knowledge is available about human behavior comparable to the knowledge we have about machines and materials. Some knowledge is
available to us. Philosophers have long concerned themselves with the subject, but only in the last 30 years have there been studies documenting behavioral principles. Earlier I mentioned Douglas McGregor, and it might be well to add Rensis Likert’s "New Patterns for Managements," M. H. Maslow’s "Motivation and Personality," and Herzberg’s "The Motivation to Work." These books, along with others, lend insights into behavior in work organizations. For a manager or supervisor, this area warrants even more study than is essential for the technical components allied to work performance.

The following may be questionable analogy but I will risk it in order to try to put the people component of the manager’s job into perspective. It is not likely that you would buy a piece of major equipment without learning all you can about its rated capacity, its maintenance requirements, lubrication schedules and specified lubricants, limits of operating utility, etc. Yet we spend much less time learning about the behavior of people, the critical resource on which we depend to get work done.

**SUMMARY**

In summary, it seems that I should bring our topic, "Problems of Managing Workers," into focus with what I have said about the nature of the managerial or supervisory job. There is no gainsaying that central to the manager’s responsibility is concern for the people whose efforts will determine the quality and quantity of work performed under his charter. By the very nature of human interaction there will always be problems where people are involved. We need to be aware, however, that these problems can be mitigated by organizing the management of work in a manner which makes the worker an integral part of the work process and not just another tool to be manipulated. How to do this becomes the challenge to the manager in today’s work environment. There is some evidence now that "Problems of Workers" can be reduced when we manage in a manner that takes into account the worker’s basic need for safety, belonging, self-respect, and the respect of others, and if he is given some freedom to achieve the best he can in a team effort.

To some, what has been presented here may reflect a mechanistic model for the managerial job. I prefer to consider it a balanced operational model. It integrates the various elements in the process of getting work performed by groups of people. In it the work structure is recognized as a system in which all elements need to be given their appropriate weight. Since the system requires workers to move
materials, operate equipment, lay out roadways, mix and apply road materials, and to perform other tasks, the manager of the work system achieves his best results when he learns and applies managerial skills to get the human resource to give their jobs the best effort.