

Comprehending Managenment



By

Robert Draper

Dear Manager,

A few years ago I wrote a letter to all of our employees regarding my interpretation of the company's mission and philosophy. Now I wish to communicate directly with you, the people we have selected to oversee the running of our operations on a regular basis.

This letter is perhaps best described as an "exploration"; a journey into your current thinking and viewpoints regarding the art of management. It is, at the same time, my attempt to help you with your responsibilities, and to assist you in polishing your skills as professional managers. It is also an effort on my part to clarify some of the more common misunderstandings about what those who are charged with overseeing others should and should not focus on in their daily undertakings.

Please take time with the study of this somewhat longer letter. Regard it, if you will, as a discovery of what you currently believe about the subject, and what you do not. If you will acknowledge that you do not know all that there is to know, you may be able to go past both, to the new. Think of this: a belief is often a hindrance to learning something new, and a non-belief is often nothing but a belief in disguise. That recognition alone will be enough to open your mind and gain you an honest start.

Introduction: The Leader You Are Searching For Is You

You may remember that I closed the letter to all employees with a lesson I stated had taken me years to learn. It is the same lesson with which I choose to begin this message to

you. It contains a most important idea, accepted by few, but perhaps, just perhaps, today accepted by you. It is this:

“The leader you are searching for is you.”

Why is this statement so important to understand and accept? Because everywhere you look in this world you find people caught in the trap of believing that things are done to them; that they are the powerless “effect” of “causes” beyond themselves. Nonsense! For example, during, and at the end of the reading of this pamphlet, a decision will be made as to learn from it, or to disregard its content. That decision alone will be the determiner of your acceptance or rejection of its message, and the dictator of that determination is no one but yourself. Simply put, life teaches you or persecutes you, at your own choice.

There is an intelligence within you, manager, an intelligence that you can also accept or reject, walk toward or run away from, embrace or deny, be glad of or fear. Yet, in the long run, you really have no choice about it, for that intelligence is you; you the student, and you the teacher who must decide – sooner or later – to teach what you have learned in order to reinforce it within yourself. To choose to avail yourself of the wisdom of that intelligence now is the most significant power your mind possesses. How many managers are unafraid of that intelligence? This question is easily answered – when you look around yourself with care – by a few other questions. How many managers do you know who are leaders? How many go beyond the tasks that come at them to the adventure of seeking for improvement through new ideas? How many managers do you perceive who are good examples on a

consistent basis? How many do you admire? And, now, what about yourself? Do you want to put forth the effort required for growth? Do you want to join the ranks of those who are respected? Or are you, too, like so many others you see, still afraid of the “dangers” of success?

Some of the ideas in this pamphlet, such as the thought that life is a choice and not an outcome, may seem new to you. Some, such as the fact that anger is really weakness, or a cover over fear, may startle you. Still others may seem old, and quite well-known to you. Let those you know strengthen your understanding of them, while you consider the possibility of truth in the new. Once, years ago, while driving my children to Disneyland I found myself describing the process of procreation to them. When I completed my story of how children are born into this world, my middle son, then eight, had a reaction to this new data. It was an emphatic, “No way!” As you read this document you might watch your mind for its reactions to it, making special note of the concepts that bring up the greatest resistance in you, the ones to which your honest initial response is, “No way!” You may find that these are the very ones that have the most to teach you.

On Being A Parent – Teacher – Manager

Let us start our learning by self-examination, and posing a series of questions. First: As a parent, would you spoil your children? Would you allow them to shirk their chores or permit them to be insolent to you? Would you let them be casual about their schoolwork, or suggest to them that it was acceptable that they be late to, or absent from school without good cause? Now, ask yourself this, in truth: “Are

you as disciplined as a boss?” It is most interesting phenomenon to observe how good parents – who could care less for their children’s passing likes and dislikes of them, knowing that someday respect for their greater wisdom will follow their current decision-making – can at the same time go to work and care more about being liked than fulfilling their assigned roles as managers. Now, what about yourself? Does this happen in your life?

Next, on the other side of the coin, are you a patient and kind parent, or would you be if you had children? Not a perfect parent; no one is a “perfect” parent. But do you try to be a good and understanding one? Do you care for your children, and do you attempt to teach them? And are you also a good supervisor? Are you patient with your employees? Are you as considerate of them in their ignorance as you would be with your children when they do not understand something? When these “younger ones” – which has nothing to do with age – see only a portion of the picture of which you have a more complete vision, do you offer them the same respect good teachers show their students? Or do you often slip into the rudeness of impatience? Ponder on this for awhile, manager, for a teacher is surely what you are.

See another thing or two about being a teacher. Good teachers are levelheaded. They repeat their lessons with those who wish to learn, until they are learned; and at the same time they, without flinching, send (discharge) to other schools those who continually refuse to participate in the lesson plan. Teaching is the highest profession anywhere. You are a teacher, and teachers find their worth in their students, “good” and “bad” alike. Find your worth,

manger, in both aspects of teaching: patience and discipline.

A further question or two. Do you, as a good manager should, perceive our employees and their varying talents fairly? Suppose, for a moment, that your superior was about to select a person for additional responsibility and commensurate reward. Would you want that person to choose one of his or her favorites for the position, or would you want to be considered if you had earned the right? How about yourself? Are you an objective and fair supervisor? Or are you perhaps caught in the incoherence of believing that you are a good boss, while at that same time having “pals” in your department?

Once again, in fairness, examine both sides of the issue of objectivity. Do you have “enemies,” either at home or at work? Would you really consider a confused child of yours your enemy? If not, is this possible within your group at work? Can any student be the opponent of a good teacher? Would holding personal grievances be a responsible and levelheaded approach to the successful accomplishment of any job? Especially for one whom we have selected to demonstrate our company’s point of view to others? And if this imaginary difficulty has become “true” in your life, could it ever turn out to be fair to you?

Let me proceed now to another point relating to justice and fairness. You are obviously aware of our “mission statement.” That statement speaks to another responsibility of ours, our responsibility to those people we serve who are ill. Have you read that statement of principle carefully? Have you thought about it? Have you seen, through a

personal lens, its call to perfection in receipt, testing, reporting, and the delivery of results? In this, have you carried its message forth to strengthen it in others? Have you reminded your employees to be as persevering and careful about performing their functions in our company, as you would expect them to be if a member of your own family were being evaluated by one of our laboratories?

In addition, have you understood the “Mission Statement’s” underlying teaching: In doing what we do to help others as diligently as possible we can find real value in both our work and in ourselves? Have you understood that latent content? Have you explained it to those in your department, and felt it for yourself as a truism? Or is it possible that when you read it, your mind regards it through your eyes with a certain degree of cynicism? Are you a believer in the worth of what we do? And are you a believer in the inherent value found in doing things the right way for the sake of doing things the right way? Or are you among those who consider themselves to be “hired labor”? Is work just work to you, with “no value added”? If so, please consider the possibility that you might be wrong, that you could be missing something. Striving to do everything you do as perfectly as possible, without being too serious about any of it, may bring a benefit you are as yet unaware of.

A Balanced Manager

Here is another thought you might reflect upon, even though you may have heard it mentioned before. Thoreau once said: “The mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” Some statement! And, if you look around

your world, obviously true. Is that for you? Have you settled in your life, manager, for the warmed-over death of some calm despair? Or do you still grow a bit each day, like a healthy tree? Is your job a “grind”? Or can today be “an experience,” and even a chance to have fun as you learn something new? Think on this. Are you alert or sleepwalking, the bearer of the cup of courage or the cup of trepidation, one how hears and sings a clarion call or a dirge, the “bearer” or the “load”? These are not trivial questions to a serious student.

I wrote another letter a few years ago that you may also remember. It was a short one, but it, too, contained a lesson: a lesson about the dangers of getting trapped in formalizing, which usually means “fossilizing” business. In it I spoke of guarding against holding mind-numbing meetings to meet some imagined need, meetings which are often held simply because leadership is lacking and no one is prepared to step forth and say, “Let us begin.” In an endeavor to help in cutting down on make-work, I suggested in that letter that our managers try holding five minute meetings whenever and wherever it was both practical and possible to do so. Addressing the quicksand of formality for the sake of form that creeps into every business, I said something like this: “Most problems can be solved in five minutes or less. If you have a problem that you cannot solve in five minutes or less, call me and I will solve it for you, in five minutes or less.” I did not say that just as an exercise, but because I saw good and hardworking people feeling overwhelmed by all they still needed to get done. Instead of accomplishing their tasks, they were sitting in unnecessary meetings, spending time

doing unnecessary things, and often suffering unnecessarily because of it.

How about yourself, manger? Do you trust yourself to go forward, with a minimum of fuss? Or do you often find yourself afraid to make a mistake, and therefore paralyzed regarding taking action now? Can you, without condoning sloppiness in any way, learn and teach not to waste time at work? And can you teach others to be efficient, yet searching for perfection in everything they do, and at the very same time learn to stop your day for a person in real need? Can you? Will you?

Some further examination: Do you understand the company's general rule about "having a partner" on major decisions? Simply put, if you make an important decision on your own and you are wrong, you are out on a limb. But if you have a partner (a peer, or more normally, your supervisor) and you make a mistake, you will find that our company understands that everyone makes wrong choices about things at times. You need advice! Everyone needs advice on issues of substance, someone to challenge their thinking. Everyone. Do you ask for advice? Can you say to another, "Be my 'devil's advocate' on this please? Or are you one of the "certain" ones? Now stop for a moment. Please see that this theme of questioning is not in contradiction to my previous comments about not wasting time in taking action on the mundane. It simply means that if the issue is important, check with someone. This will also save time in that there will be fewer mistakes to be corrected later. See this as well.

If you refuse to do as this requires, you dwell amongst the “certainly uncertain,” those who are certain without reason because underneath it all they are actually very uncertain of themselves. Learn to “feel” for the right way, manager, and you will make haste on your journey.

While we are on the subject, are you a balanced manager? Have you found that place of confidence between firmness and flexibility, and do you do your best to abide there? Or are you often “kind” and “liked” and “good,” or on the other hand, “difficult” and “feared” and unreasonable”? Do you see, now, that any of these, lived in the extreme, is basically ineffective and makes no sense.

Do you hear rumors around you, manager; or do you discourage rumor and the carrying of tales within your group or department? Can you see the venom that is often secreted away in gossip? Can you see the harm to a person – and therefore to the company – in a “friend” telling another, “Do you know what he or she said about you” if the “what” he or she was negative? There is neither friendship nor helpfulness in any such interaction. There is malice, and malice alone. Nor is there any “lie of omission” in the act of “not telling.” To never lie also means to never tell a “hurtful truth.” See this: Hurt and truth can never be in the same place at the same time; one contradicts the other.

Do you also understand – completely and fully, as you well should as a leader in our company – the abuse inherent in harassment of any kind? Are you aware that we consider all its forms – sexual, physical, intellectual, psychological, verbal, behavioral, and otherwise – totally unacceptable?

Would you want to be harassed, to live under the constant, or perhaps worse, inconsistent hazing or oppression of another, in any school of learning? Would you not hate it for yourself, and do you, therefore, extinguish it, as you would a dangerous fire when it arises within your sight? Have you learned as yet how to apologize when you yourself forget and blunder into this mean and ugly terrain? Do you rectify all such situations immediately, your first corrective thought being your responsibility to bring harmony into the chaos that was caused? Do you act as you would want to be treated? Do you see all of our employees as equals, respecting them for putting forth their best within the realm of their personal capabilities? Are you a good example, the appropriate type of representative of our company to its people? Are you decent? Are you fair?

Correcting Mistakes

In the same arena can be found another contagion. This one may at times seem innocuous and even normal, but believe me, its poison is no less lethal than that of harassment. In fact, it could be thought of as simply another form of harassment. What is it? Blame, which always hurts both parties involved. How can you avoid the ravages of its stinging bilateral pain? Simple. Do not engage in it! Try this: Understand that blame is not correction, which always attempts to unify and strengthen, but rather separation, which always divides and therefore weakens. Correction is a change from wrong to right, an amending and an improvement. It is a teaching, not a punishment. “You did not do that, did you? is not a question. It is merely a false statement and self-given

superiority posing as a question. Are you that free of error? See this and accept it: Blame is nothing but a mistake added to a mistake, a uselessness that will accomplish little but the promotion of anxiety and the hindrance of communication.

What should you do with your employees' mistakes? Your function as a manager is not complicated. It is to point out error with all the calmness at your disposal, and then, as a good teacher, show the mistake-maker how to fix the problem. And then, as a sane human being, get on with the next hour of your life. Be above this snake-infested pit of blame, and do not foster the blight of guilt in anyone. Instruct, not discourage. Above all, do not argue with your employees under any conditions! Listen, inform, and quietly await results. Do not quarrel and bluster; pretension will only weaken your command. Do not threaten; threats will merely create uncertainty. Teach, correct, and respond with dignity, as best you can. And when you forget to live by these sensible rules for peaceful and efficient interaction, remember that business is never personal. Say "I am sorry" to the offended party or parties in one form or another, and give yourself the same fresh start that you would offer to anyone who made a simple mistake.

Learn a few things more. First, when faced with the unknown, do not try to give an answer. Instead, try this: "I do not know, but I will find out and get back to you as quickly as possible." Secondly, please do not hide your problems – or those of anyone in your department – out of a false sense of pride or imagined fear of reprisal. None of us is perfect in this imperfect world. Your managers are there to help you, as you are there to help people who work

for you. Believe this! We do not have a philosophy of punishment in our organization. Reprimands for mistakes at times? Yes. Penalties upon occasion? Yes. Discharge under certain circumstances? Yes. Deliberate attempts to correct through punishment as a company policy? Never!

Please try to comprehend this as well: Being impersonal about business is not in any way a recommendation for a lack of personal motivation, interaction, effort, or example. It does not suggest that you be “cold” about anything whatsoever. See it rather as a safeguard against becoming “hot” about something. When a manager is angry he or she is out of balance, perceiving in distortion and less than fully effective. When this occurs, as it most definitely will at times, try to remember this helpful hint: Attack has the power to make the “not that serious” seem very serious indeed! If you get upset at work, see if you can recall that tip, reflect on it for a moment, take a ten minute break from the fearful issue, and finally say to yourself, “I want common sense and not rage as my guide. “Then try once again, quietly, to resolve the problem. If you can realize – not perfectly but rather like the sun that slowly dawns – that attack is not a power, but a handicap, you will have come a long way. Even if you still slip back into its old familiar ways, you will – once you truly accept the fact of the foregoing – eventually recall the better lesson.

Be brave, manager. Not foolhardy (“bold without judgment”), but brave. Remember, you are the one the others look up to, or will, if you learn these lessons. If you vote for fear, who around you will choose for courage? Yet, at the same time, try to remember to be kind to yourself as well. We all get afraid and off balance at times.

To deny that is not courage, it is fear added to fear. Be kind to yourself when you are not at your best, simply by remembering the fact that everyone has bad days here. If you are a serious student in life's school, the lessons can often be quite difficult. If they come in a "serious" form, consider this: Perhaps they are a witness to your potential to learn. "Moan" if necessary, but please, only just long enough to remember to laugh at yourself afterwards.

The Choice Not To Settle

See this: Our employees need your help, the company needs your help, and you need your help. One of the very worst – and by that I mean the most foolish – things a manager can do is to become apathetic; to accept, give up, or give in. do not "rage, rage, against the dying of the light"; rage, rage at the dying of the fight – in you. The basic point to understand is this: If you are striving toward a goal and you find the road you are on is blocked, do not surrender; instead try another road, and if necessary, another still. Yet when something is done and over and you can do no more, cease your activity completely, and calmly accept the situation for what it is and then get on with the next issue. Say a good employee leaving your group whom you want to stay, but who insists on leaving – calmly let the person go. Next, replace him or her, if possible from within the company, with the best person you can find. We will survive, and even thrive. We always do! But remember, never give up without your best fight! And always accept the end of the situation with both graciousness and a lack of residual resentment on your part regardless of the behavior of others.

Look around your world with “open eyes,” you may be amazed. What will you see? That so many people have decided to sit down on the journey is incredible. They have “settled” for a few meager crumbs of fleeting pleasure, and a few tiny moments of passing respite from the unavoidable. They are like those who want to win the lottery without buying a ticket. Is the silliness, sadness, and disappointment of that for you? Why? Who mandates that such littleness is for you, who could seek for glory and hope of true peace and accomplishment right now? Who demands your ignorance and unrest be permanent? Who suggests that because you will never overcome your (self-imposed) limitations, you best just settle? Who but you, of course.

Never give up. Never say, “I cannot do.” The moment that you say “I cannot,” you cannot. You should not argue for your limits and thereby impress them upon yourself. Look at Helen Keller, Mother Teresa, David Hawking, or Abraham Lincoln. Did they surrender? To believe I cannot do because of my boss, position, race, gender, handicap, upbringing, looks, lack of education, or whatever, is behind you if you will let it be. Nothing is hard to accomplish if you are determined about it. What do you want? Define it. Then stand up and head in its direction! Take the first step toward it, and do not ever feel sorry for yourself along the way. You can do anything possible!

Let me make another point: Do not feel sorry for anyone, either yourself or another. Please understand that I am not speaking of a coldness of attitude, but rather about real help. Do you understand the ugliness inherent in pity?

Would you want someone to pity you? Can you see the shallowness and falsity that lie behind excessive sympathy? Can you discern the mistake at the core of the temptation to agree with anyone's – another's or your own – desire to be perceived as a victim?

Thank about it. Would you say to children you wished to prepare for a difficult world – except, perhaps, in unusual circumstances – “Oh you poor dears.” Or would you not brace them up and encourage and support them, attempting to motivate and point out hopeful doors of opportunity to them when they had falsely believed they were downtrodden and helpless? And what else but this would you want another to do for you?

Keep thinking about this for a moment. Here is the central problem of business in a nutshell: The childish belief in limitation. Do you want me to confirm to you that you are a victim, manager, one more of the world's poor dears”? Shall I recommend to you that you be quiet now in the hope someday that you may retire and not suffer too much, and then “die in peace”? Or shall I tell you the truth; that your experience of being oppressed comes only from your own thinking, and you can transcend those beliefs when you are ready. Manager, there is no difficulty you cannot turn into an opportunity if you are willing to learn! There is no problem that is not a lesson in disguise! There is no bad that you cannot eventually turn into a good in your life and ours. There is nothing you cannot do!

Do you remember the point I made earlier about the power of choice that resides in everyone's mind? You may have heard me speak on the training films of Nietzsche saying,

“What does not kill me strengthens me,” or Viktor Frankl’s point in Man’s Search For Meaning about man’s last remaining freedom being choosing one’s attitude in any circumstance. Do you believe these statements? Do you believe them for you? Or is this just another old saw the world of bitterness and defeat is trying to foist on you? Or perhaps it is just another trick of business management to get you to try harder for the sake of “them.”

Think again, manager. Do you believe that it is all up to you? Do you believe that it is possible that your speech, your attitude, your thinking, your sight, the very meaning of each moment of your life, is yours in determination and decision? Or instead do you believe that life causes you? Do you teach, and therefore learn, faintheartedness or fortitude? Do you see as your due, failure or success? Do you flow around barriers like water, or do you oppose in preset and concretized positions? Are you now, right at this moment, energized or depressed at the thought that it is all up to you?

To continue. Can you do just some things, and not others? Are there exceptions to the idea that you do anything possible? Can you learn, if you want to, to sing or dance or speak in public with confidence? Can you do anything you really set your mind to? Are you happy to learn of your depth and character (which does not mean that you enjoy a painful lesson while you are in the midst of it, anymore than enjoying having a cavity filled), or are you persecuted by the lessons of the school? Are you in school? Or perhaps, is this for you a prison? Do you try your best, and even at your worst times, recover and begin again? Can you? Will you?

Do you believe that it is possible to learn to smile at pain and grief and weakness, and that it is possible to accept that melancholy is a self-assumed state of mind that can be as equally shed by you? If you do not believe this, would you want to? If not, why not? Obviously, it can only be because you see a value in the idea of your own helplessness. What else? But if you are really not helpless, how can believing that you are be of any assistance to you? Look, manager, and do not be afraid to see: The bad news is that no one can do “it” for you; the good news is that you can!

Two Choices

Study this for a moment or two: “Negative” = “Oh why do these terrible things always happen to me? Why do I always stumble and fall, become afraid and falter, ‘lose it’ and look foolish, forget and repeat over and over again these same stupid mistakes?” “Positive” = “This is terrific? Look how quickly I rebounded from this fall, recovered from my fearful state of mind, regained my calm and self-respect, and remembered that this was not the end of everything, but just another silly error along the road to correction of my forgetting.”

See something further: These alone are your choices when you err, manager. There is no gray zone in which to dwell in seeming safety, no recess point in the midst of the struggle in your mind, no real and lasting neutral zone anywhere at all. You are either progressing or going backward, learning or forgetting, in the darkness of negativity or in the light of optimism. And you are, once

again, always teaching and learning one or the other. Two choices, one or the other, with you as the chooser and no choice in between. Pick one as you will, and proceed immediately to “jail” or “go.”

Yet, do not be disheartened about this news if your life seems to have been stuck in a negative zone. All states of despair with time for one who wants to grow. The sun does not disappear when the clouds temporarily seem to take its place. It waits patiently for its time to shine on you again, and will do so when the clouds are gone. Yet, please see that this letter does not argue for that kind of patience; that you should wait shuddering alone in darkness, suffering in fear until the clouds of ignorance and superstition pass you by. Far from it! Blow the clouds away. You are the one who put them there, and you are also the wind that can chase them on their way. Never give up or give in, manager. You can do anything possible!

Continuing in that same vein, let me try another question or two with you. Are you one to read about the great lives of others, even of the quiet lives of those humble circumstances who nevertheless overcome those circumstances to live with grace and dignity? Or do you live a life which is headed in that direction, despite your problems, your upbringing, and your frequent wanderings from your goal? Are you hobbled in your future quest by dismay over your trivial errors of the past? Are you distressed at the present? Or are you confident that you will do well in the future?

Do you recognize that you can often do twice as much in half the time if you will shun the unnecessary? Can you

refuse to become bureaucratic, yet accept – without resentment – the need to fill out “all the required forms”? Can you be a seeker of better ways to accomplish our mission, and at the same time follow the rules without resistance? Can you make suggestions and accept their rejection yet continue with the process time and again? Can you learn, and teach, not to fight the nonsense that creeps into every corporation? Can you perceive opposition as a waste of energy, and can you sidestep seriousness as a method of conserving it? Can you do this while quietly trying to do away with the not-required? Are you growing in your cooperation with the whole while trying to do your part to improve it? Will you?

The Employee Advocate Program

Do you understand what I mean when I say that we are better served, as are our clients, by doing our best to run a “good” company, not a “perfect” company? Can you understand that a good company can be intolerant of error, and yet at the same time tolerant of the difficulties which arise in our employees’ lives and minds? Can you see that good managers take care of the employees along with the clients? Ask yourself this, please: If someone who works for you is “a seven” out of “a ten,” can you help that employee find his or her potential and arrive at “nine”? Does it make any sense (and is it fair) to fire someone in such a condition, unless he or she is truly not trying, and instead of training the person, search for “a ten”? How many “tens” do you think there are out there? How many do you see around you? That is how many are “out there.” More importantly, see this: If no one within our company

will help our people uncover their potential and to do better at work and in life, who will?

And how about yourself? What about your learning, value, and worth? Do you accept your place in our corporation; do you play, as flawlessly as possible, your part in the music? Can you perceive the inestimable value of your contribution? Yet what possible good can your real self-worth do you, unless you honor it as well. And do not deceive yourself any longer. To honor it is both to accept it and act on it. Do you? Will you?

Do you tell the truth to the “Employee Advocates” when they call? Always? Or do you sometimes hold back, perhaps just a little? In other words, do you “pocket” a bit of your upset at the company or “at them,” when you know that you should not? Secret indignation often seems like a powerful future weapon, when in truth it is nothing more than a defense in the form of a “justified” grievance. Understand this if you can: The more defenses you have, the more beleaguered you will appear to be to yourself. Every defense says to a person’s mind, “I am at risk in hostile company.” Yet can those who hold grievances and build on them perceiving that as strength, ever possible see themselves as weakening their own position?

See something further: Grievances are grudges; they feed instability. Grievances are a withholding, a restriction, a conflict in harmony. They hamper good judgment, and they always, in one way or another, interfere with a smooth flow of our work. Grievances are not for any imagined future use, they are for resolving now. And what else is the “Employee Advocate” program, if not your grievance

committee? Please cooperate with its administrators and allow them to perform their function. Speak to them about your problems. If you do not find satisfaction with them, speak to your supervisor, and if need be, to his or hers. We will not be annoyed by this. If something bothers you about our company or your department, it bothers me. At the end of the process, if you are still dissatisfied, you will end up with me. I promise you, if you have followed the chain of command, I will not be bothered by that. I may or may not agree with you, but at least we will have dealt with the issue and you will no longer have to carry it around.

While I am at it, consider this: Sometimes along this path of resolution you may discover, after a few people have disagreed with you, that you were wrong. If that happens, try to see the gift in your mistake and change your mind about the issue right away. So many people struggle on unhappily toward being right when they are wrong, that it is simply ludicrous. Often you will find that you would be better off if you were wrong. Learn to relax about being right, and about letting go of your grievances. Learn to be peaceful and happy in the moment of the day in which you best serve yourself, this moment, now.

Think on this for a moment: Righteousness often leads to a density and a burden of pain, while relaxation about being “right” often brings the freedom of ease and laughter. As a manager, which would you teach, remembering the fact that the positive choices you make for yourself are the exact ways that you give aid to others, and the assistance and good example you offer to others is the exact way in which you help yourself? When the world is grim and temporarily dark, do you stand for the alternative? And if

you forget and whimper a bit, too, do you remember to get up with a mind-clearing call from the internal intelligence which always says, “Carry on”? Are you the call to progress or the echo of retreat? Ponder on this, teacher, and then refuse to give in or stay down in any way! Refuse!

Self-Evaluation

In honest self-evaluation, do you screech or teach, scold or enfold? Do you attempt to heal and not hurt? Are you dramatic or sincere, or are you both? Do you give speeches or talks? Are you formal or for real? Are you snobbish or merciful, unkind or kind, firm yet flexible or soft and silly? With yourself as well?

I said previously that you restrict your assistance to yourself, or confine the level of aid you accept for yourself, to do the parameters of what you are willing to offer to others. This is no high teaching, but plain common sense. Selfishness always fails! The fact that you cannot exceed your own self-imposed limits in giving to others or in receiving for yourself, is merely the truth. In simple terms, this means that what you believe others deserve you will believe you deserve, and vice-versa, regardless of any selfish thoughts you hold to the contrary. If you see now that you have been upset and unseeing, and selfish in that disturbance and ignorance, do this: Stop. It was a mistake. That is all. If you owe a few apologies, pass them out. Then, simply begin your learning again.

Do another good thing for everyone, including yourself. Do not do other people’s work for them. Do not sacrifice

for another. Do not teach bad habits, and at the same time try not to be a nag. Give those who work for you their assignments, help them when you should, and when their work is below the standards you know they are capable of, give it back to them to do again. Check the “assignments” of those you teach, but again, do not rob your students of their learning by doing their lessons for them. Feel for what is right, and when you realize you have been mistaken, say you are sorry and put the situation back together again. It will not hurt at all.

The Authority Problem

Some more thoughts to consider in question form. Are you truly obedient, or somewhat resistant – actively or passively – to authority? No? You are not being completely honest with yourself if you replied “No,” manager. Why? Because everyone is resistant to authority; everyone has an authority problem, including you. Oh, you may well have taught yourself to obey the rules, but proper behavior is not the same as obedience without strain. Why does everyone have this problem, some even quite actively? Simply, because all people believe that they would be able to diminish or even dismiss their uncertainty and discomfort if they could only control things, circumstances, and others.

Yet, you have about as much chance in succeeding with this as you would in controlling nature. Can you control the weather for example? Of course not! Can you control your reactions to the weather? Of course you can! (I do not mean can you control your reactions to the weather by force of will or by the power of your mind. I mean can you

relax and be at peace and simply enjoy a rainy day, regardless of your plans for an outing or whatever?) Since this is so, why not learn to do this with life? Why not learn to step aside from your desires to control everything – your authority problem – and in that calmness, simply enjoy what is? Why fight about what “should be”? What “should be” is what “is.” How you deal with that fact now, not how it should have been, is the real and only factual point. The rest is but imagination.

Look. Do not take this, again, as a humble acceptance of wrongdoing, or as a simpleminded resignation to error. It just means to change the future, not the past, and improve that future through a proper perspective of what is here in front of you now. If something should be changed now, change it. Like you would a flat tire if your job were changing flat tires. In peace. Care enough about us all to enjoy this hour. What else can life be for, teacher? Suffering and unfulfilled wishes? Doubtful indeed.

While I am at it. Who is there really to care about, except yourself? To care about yourself is not selfish, for it will inevitably lead to caring about your co-workers and your work as well. Perceive this: To care about yourself, your co-workers, and your work is to care about your company and its clients, and managers worth their salt always care about their company and its clients. See this: To be concerned about the well-being of another and yourself is a visible manifestation – a mirror – of your mind’s faith in your own self-worth. To care about everyone and everything is to be care.

Five Final Points

Now, with gratitude for your patience and your attention, I will close with five final points:

Why listen to all of this?

What is common to all of us?

What would we do if we could create a “perfect” company?

What are the primary responsibilities of every good manager?

What is the single lesson for today?

“Why listen to all of this?” Why indeed? Let us suppose that you are reasonably content, perhaps comfortable and a bit tired after a long journey of accomplishment. Or perhaps you are young and just want to live and have some fun, and not have to think too much. Or maybe you feel put upon, and all of this sounds a bit like school lessons requiring unwanted extra effort. So why listen? Why bother? Why not just take the easy road from now on? Look around you at your world, manager, and then ask your intelligence, “Why not?” Then be quiet, and instead of providing the answer, listen for it. The first thing your own good common sense will tell you is that the world is in a terrible shambles. The next thing it will tell you is that it is not just “their” world; it is equally your world. Then, if you listen carefully, your own intelligence will tell you what you are supposed to do about it. Trust it! It is your intelligence. It cares for you. So quietly ask yourself why you should listen to all of this. Your answer will not be long in coming.

“What is common to all of us? Simply this: We are all in the same school together, you, me, and everyone you see,

meet, and even say hello to. We are all on a quest together, traveling through an adventure of learning which knows no bounds. And we are, one and all, here to help each other in this important and common mission of learning to remember all that we have forgotten: Our dignity and our potential to remember what we really can be, and are. What else is common to us all? Our schoolhouse (our company); it is our common home away from home. Treat it and its occupants (your fellow students) with respect. Appreciate this: The Company's health relates in many ways to your own. What is common to all of us is treating the company, its mission and philosophy, and everyone in the company with the appropriate graciousness. Do just that and it will be enough.

“What would we do if we could create a ‘perfect’ company?” That is a good question. Think about it for awhile. New companies begin all the time, many with the idea that they are going to be the perfect company. Yet so few make any lasting progress. Why? Could it be that they are looking in the wrong place for their perfection? Consider this: If we were going to try right now (and why not?) to make this company, our company, the best place possible to work, teach, and learn our lessons, what would we do first? Could it be that we would – outside of fixing mechanical things, which are actually the smallest part of any decent company's problems – perhaps stop trying to “fix” other people, and instead begin to focus our energies on fixing ourselves? If example is the best teacher, and it is, what then could be a more effective tool for the improvement of our corporation than the daily attention to the improvement of ourselves? So “fix” yourself, manager, and then let all your improvements flow naturally into your

work and your relationships at work. Help us continue to grow as a “good company. That will be “perfect.”

“What are the primary responsibilities of every good manager?”

“Protect the company.” Try to understand this. The company represents the whole, and its protection always comes first. What does that mean? This: When you reach a place where the question arises as to “What is to be placed first?” pause for a moment and let your intelligence inform you of the appropriate course of action. It is always there, and its understanding will tell you that nothing comes before what feeds us all. This, obviously, does not mean that you are to hurt someone in order to help the company. That would be harmful to the whole, and therefore counterproductive. It means feel for the right answer for our company in this situation, the one that you are facing now. Then execute your function as a manager, both expeditiously and efficiently. Do not agonize. Do not belabor the issue. Do not fear. You know what is right, and if you do not, “your partner” does. Remember, we chose you. You are our manager!

“Protect the people.” Understand that “the people” are the company. Protect them, nurture them, encourage them, teach them, help them, and if necessary fire them as well. All of that is to protect the people. You know that! Do exactly for them what you would want a good boss, teacher, or parent to do for you under the same circumstances. Your answer for yourself will be the right answer for them as well; always. Lead, manager, and earn respect, not adulation!

“Protect the business.” What does this mean? It means perceive, as does every good chess player, the consequences of your actions as you take them. Try to think of it in this way: It is not possible to help the company and its people, and yet hurt the business, even though you will at times have to put the business in second place to the company or its people. Yet remember this: “Pride” comes after, not before the business; “insistence” comes after, not before the business; “being right” comes after, not before the business; “self-advancement” comes after, not before the business; and so on and so forth. Think ahead as you act, manager, and all will be well.

“What is the single lesson for today?” Courtesy and kindness. Look, you are here, with all your classmates, and certainly a place full of lessons. In fact, there is enough on your plate right now (relationships to improve or heal, things to learn, promotions to earn) to last you for at least the next five years. Please accept this, and then try to see that what you choose as your journey’s companion for the next year or ten is the only real answer being a single choice – made over and over again – between “Inconsideration” or “Courtesy.” Accept, if you can, that the one you select to be your guide you automatically strengthen in yourself, and what you truly strengthen within yourself you eventually will become! See how many chances there are in your world to be courteous today, and as you see them act on them.

See the practicality in desiring to be kind to both others and yourself, and understand this: Your kindness to others is limited to the extent of your kindness to yourself; as your kindness to yourself finds its maximum capacity in your

kindness to others. Be kind to all. If things are difficult for you today, go and find someone who needs help and watch your pain diminish in proportion to your giving.

In conclusion, be a positive force, manager. Do this one thing for yourself and the company, for its employees and the business. Do this one thing for all of us. Remember your worth, and then give the gift of hope and harmony I know you want for yourself. And this above all: Be kind.

Respectfully,

Robert e. Draper