

The Talent Management scheme in which I was unwittingly involved was devised and put into practice within the English Electric (EE) Group, which in the 1960s was one of the largest companies in the UK. My initial contact with EE was the Group Personnel Director who, following the example of the recruitment to a top job of a Lecturer in the Cambridge Engineering Laboratory and with the approval of the Chairman, his successor and other senior members of the Group, had in mind progressing me to high office in the Group and returning me to a senior academic appointment in the University of Cambridge. The Managing Director of the Marconi Instruments (MI) subsidiary was aware of the plan; he would almost certainly have heard of me through his involvement in the instrument industry and may also have had a plan of his own involving the Chairman of Cambridge Instruments. It was while the Group Personnel Director was on holiday that the MD of Marconi Instruments stepped in, put some extra touches to the process of winking me out of the Cavendish Laboratory, recruited me to his Company and set out to develop me. Essentially he assumed the Chief Trainer role in a top-level Talent Management scheme. I was not aware I was cast as the Trainee – I thought I was taking on an innovative technical job which would provide more management experience.

The Scheme was ill-conceived, badly managed and corrupted and I strongly resisted the methods of development it used. As a result it failed utterly to achieve its purpose.

A few important points about the MD of Marconi Instruments:-

The MD obtained a physics degree and taught physics at a school before joining the RAF. It is not at present known what function he had in the RAF nor postwar what work he carried out as a technical civil servant. What was clear in the time I was at M.I. was that he had no interest in the technical aspects of the Hi Tech products the company was producing.

On joining Marconi Wireless Telegraph at Chelmsford the MD progressed to General Management via an Education and Personnel function and his network within English Electric Group when I knew him was on the Personnel and Training side. He was reputed to be a developer of people. The Works Manager was a protégé who in 1965 was appointed General Manager of Sanders, a small microwave company taken over by Marconi Instruments. Others were developed as Personal Assistants of the MD.

In brief, the scenario which best explains the twists and turns of events in the English Electric Group and in particular at Marconi Instruments is that:-

- i. The Chairman of the Group was closely involved in my 'extraction' from the Cavendish Laboratory for an appointment at Group Board level and a return to an appointment in the University of Cambridge. The Research Director and an Engineer Director of the Group acted in support of this objective. Another member of the Group Board, a senior Establishment figure well prosed in academic politics, was influential in smoothing the path from the University of Cambridge.
- ii. The MD was instructed by the Group Chairman or Director of Personnel to brief or teach me about the managerial practices and pitfalls of life at the top of the Group and he did so reluctantly, in an alienating manner, first after discussion with his Works Manager and then off his own bat.
- iii. The MD's plan was to keep my progression within MI and the Instrument Industry rather than the Group while he himself had ambitions to move upward in the Group. If I left MI for a job in another part of the Group his reputation as a developer of people would be damaged.
- iv. I gradually gleaned what was going on but because of the covert nature of the processes and the divergent objectives of the trainers it was impossible to get a clear idea of what was intended and by whom. For example I could not identify who sought the departure from office of the Chairman of the Group nor those who sought my return to Cambridge, not to the University but to a small Hi Tech company.

The feature of the Scheme I found particularly difficult to accept was the use of Advanced Organisational Behaviour (AOB) techniques. For details see AOB Elements.

The AOB content of the Scheme included the following:-

1. A Total Approach to influence and intelligence – no boundaries sacrosanct.
2. Indirect Communication - covertness in communication e.g. conveying information by hints.
3. The application of Psychological Techniques such as:-
 - a. A Negative (Intimidatory) Psychological stimulus (NIP) – i.e. a non-physical 'stick',
 - b. A Positive (Encouraging) Psychological stimulus (PEP) – i.e. a non-physical 'carrot',
 - c. A series of PEPs and/or NIPs in various configurations according to purpose, e.g. NIPS only (hate campaign), PEPS only (confidence boosting), differential (diversion) and alternating (wearing down).
4. The use intermediaries i.e. agents for influence and intelligence (Agentii).

The Total Training Scheme (TTS), as I experienced and came to call it, gave rise to:-

5. Human Rights Issues. I have bundled together under this heading questions of Legality, Ethicality, Freedom, Privacy, Integrity and Transparency.
6. A Clash of Cultures covers the false assumptions made by the trainers about my values and approach to management, coupled to their confidence that I would wish or could be coerced to change to suit the requirements of the Scheme.

Then/Now Comments

As an aid to studying the AOB techniques encountered while employed by Marconi Instruments I have numbered 96 passages in the 1962-66A Marconi Instruments files and produced a table of additional comments on the passages, comparing what I thought THEN and what my view is NOW. Many of my NOW comments reflect a realisation that THEN I was being taught, very badly, the practices and hazards of high office. Some of that realisation came from personal experience – for example the remarks about next-door-neighbours reporting on behaviour (1962 p4 #04A) took on a new significance when a journalist asked me what I thought about a nearby family which was at the time in the news. Other insights have come from an increasing awareness of covert events in the public at large and from books and papers on management development.

Classification Table

A Classification Table has also been produced in which AOB content can be identified in terms of the above six categories. The column headings are

TTS : Total Approach

ICN : Indirect Communication

PNS : PEP/NIP Systems

AGT : Agentii

HRI : Human Rights Issues

COC : Clash of Cultures

In the PNS Column:-

P = PEP, **N** = NIP

Ns & Ps = series of NIPS & PEPS

DVN = PN Diversion attempt.

In the current edition of the Classified Table only one of the columns in each numbered passage has been chosen as an exemplar of that particular AOB category. In most passages more and in some cases all (e.g. 10, 54, 86, 88A, 88B) could have been 'marked'.

The Then/Now Comments and the Classification Table have been combined into one document:-

AOB at MI Comments & Classification

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