CHAPTER

1 ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- Organizational behavior is the study of how people act, think, and feel in organized settings. The roots of the field go back thousands of years. Since the 1900s, major perspectives on organizational behavior have included scientific management, the human relations approach, and the contingency approach.
- Adopting a contingency orientation means recognizing that organizational behavior is complex and driven by a variety of factors. Consequently, pat (or "cookbook") answers are elusive. Managers must develop their own answers, at least to an extent.
- Outstanding managers possess four sets of skills that allow them to effectively navigate the process of managing behavior. That process involves (1) identifying the behavioral challenge; (2) identifying the causes of current behavior; (3) choosing a strategy for attaining behavioral goals; and (4) implementing and adjusting the chosen strategy as needed.
- The behavioral challenges managers face today are exacerbated by the increasing complexity of the work environment and the fast pace of demographic and technological changes.
- The work force is becoming increasingly diverse. Most of the growth in the work force is being driven by women and various racial or ethnic minorities. Increasing internationalization is also bringing people from a variety of cultural backgrounds together in the workplace.
- Being able to manage diversity well is more important than ever because decisions are increasingly made in cross-functional teams and task forces. But most corporations still have a long way to go to create a work environment in which diversity is embraced.
- Likewise, managers need to understand that people who traditionally have been discriminated against (e.g., gays, people with disabilities) represent valuable pools of employee talent.
- Business practices, cultural values, and market structures usually vary—sometimes dramatically—from country to country. These factors impact all aspects of behavior management and raise the bar when it comes to managers' skills.
- As workplace demands continue to increase, they may spill over into family life. Exacerbating the issue is the fact that family structures have shifted over the years toward more dual-career couples and single parents. Managers who can recognize these work-family issues and craft flexible solutions will be rewarded with greater employee loyalty and performance.

SEARCHING FOR MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

The New Workaholics

America is aging. In fact, by 2025 the entire United States population will be as old demographically as Florida—the country's top retirement haven—is now. And the work force is aging, too. Over the next decade, the number of employees age 50 and up will continue to rise while the number of younger employees will fall. By 2005, the median age of all employees will be over 40 (compared to 34 in 1979). Companies that once relied on younger employees have shifted their hiring focus. McDonald's, for example, already has an average of five "seniors" in every one of its restaurants in the U.S.

Despite these statistics, few companies seem to understand the challenges associated with an aging work force. One such challenge is to overcome negative perceptions regarding older employees. Contrary to stereotypes, older employees often work harder and are more reliable than their younger counterparts. One report actually calls employees age 55 and older "the new workaholics." So why is this age group so hard-working? Part of the reason may be that older employees typically have no children at home and are more likely to regard work as a major focus of their lives.

On the other hand, several drawbacks can be linked to an older work force. For example, pay, benefits, and retirement costs tend to be higher for older workers. And, although they tend to have fewer accidents on the job than their younger colleagues, employees over 65 may take longer to recover from them. Older employees also are often less mobile and less willing than their younger counterparts to be sent anywhere on their employer's behalf. In addition, as demands for older workers rise, they will increasingly be able to "call the shots" in terms of pay, job duties, and benefits—making them even more costly to employ.

A final challenge has to do with management. The aging work force means that employees in their 50s and 60s increasingly have bosses that are decades younger. That's especially the case in technology-intensive industries where many of the most successful managers and entrepreneurs are under age 35. Having to "take orders" from someone young enough to be your kid can produce plenty of conflict! Likewise, younger bosses may feel awkward giving performance feedback to their "senior subordinates."

As we sketch out organizational behavior in this introductory chapter, we'll touch on the many emerging issues facing the field. Clearly, effectively managing the work force as it ages is one such issue. In the meantime, think about how firms might do a better job of managing the aging work force. Then take a look at the "Will It Work?" box at the end of this chapter for some recent steps that companies have taken to embrace the new workaholics.[1]

MANAGING BEHAVIOR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

Managing people in the 21st century is also about embracing something—change. In many ways, the manager's job is still the same—to motivate, inspire, and influence, among other things. What's different today is the increasing complexity of the work environment and the breakneck pace of change. The complex variety of social, demographic, and technological change makes managing people more challenging than ever. As one manager we know puts it, "It's like pushing water uphill with a rake!"

And the stakes are high. There's nothing more important to corporate success than valuing people highly and managing them well. In fact, companies that do so have higher sales, profitability, and stock value per employee than firms that don't.[2] Southwest Airlines illustrates what we mean. It's the only major airline in the U.S. to enjoy over 20 straight years of profitability. Some have suggested that the Southwest "formula" for success boils down to cheap fares, plenty of advertising, and keeping things simple to cut costs (e.g., by flying just one type of plane). Pretty basic and easy to copy? Yes. But competitors who have gone the low-cost route have failed. That's because the real secret to Southwest's success is an enthusiastic, fun-loving culture that provides purpose and a sense of espirit de corps for employees. And that culture can't be copied easily. As CEO Herb Kelleher says, "Culture has everything to do with it."[3]

Ironically, the increasing pace of change in information technology (IT) underscores the value of people like never before. Because it evolves so rapidly and yet is so cheap and available, technology is rarely a source of sustainable competitive advantage for companies. Granted, firms must stay abreast of technological advances and hope to pull ahead of competitors in doing so. But a "technological edge" is fleeting—it won't keep a company on top for long! One study has shown that investments in IT workers pay greater dividends than investments in IT hardware and software. At the risk of using a cliche, it's the people that count!

That's the critical difference when you look at successful companies as diverse as Cisco Systems, Harley-Davidson, Merck, Southwest Airlines, and Wal-Mart. Behind that success lies excellent people management, a strong corporate culture, and superb employees. Jack Welch, General Electric's former CEO, felt that success in his job had three basic components: choosing the right people, helping to transfer ideas throughout the company, and deciding how to allocate resources.[4]

And research supports this argument. When employees quit, they're not leaving the company, they're leaving their managers. So a cadre of great managers creates an incredible competitive advantage, especially in terms of building an outstanding workplace environment that's hard for other firms to duplicate. In fact, creating that environment in the first place is strategic because it allows a company to out-execute the competition. The manager is the medium through which all company policies, procedures, and initiatives are presented to employees. All managers, whether they realize it or not, set the motivational tone for employees. Great managers are genuinely interested in helping people grow and be successful and finding roles that fit their talents. Lousy managers, on the other hand, often set a destructive tone that eventually undermines the firm itself (e.g., "You'd better not be better than me").[5]

But implementing what sounds like a straightforward management philosophy is anything but easy. That's especially true in these challenging times. This book will provide some guidelines—if not answers—to the complexities of effective behavior management. We'll start by providing some perspective on the field of organizational behavior and how this knowledge foundation can help in the management process. Next, we'll present a framework for managing behavior. That framework will describe both the skills necessary for managers to be successful and the process they should follow in putting those skills to good use. Finally, we'll underscore the need for such a framework by discussing the evolving management challenges facing the field of organizational behavior in the years ahead.

ORGANIZATIONAL BEHAVIOR: THE KEY TO EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT

At this point, you may be convinced that the effective management of people is the key to corporate success. But now we need to explain how an understanding of organizational behavior is the key to meeting that challenge. We'll start that process with an overview of the field.

The History and Evolution of Organizational Behavior

Organizational behavior examines how and why people act, think, and feel in corporate and other organized settings. The field is concerned with timeless questions such as the nature of leadership, how to motivate people, how to resolve interpersonal conflicts, and how to develop effective teams. We say "timeless" because the fundamental issues in organizational behavior—the rapidly changing workplace notwithstanding—aren't new. In fact, the field's roots go back thousands of years.

For example, ancient Chinese emperors grappled with how to efficiently organize a vast work force of civil servants. And in the Roman Empire, experiments with tenure-based wage classifications (what are called tiered wage systems today) created problems. But we'll spare you the details of some 4,000 years of history—you can pursue that on your own. The point is that concerns about organizational behavior have always been with us.

We'll jump ahead with our time line to the U.S. in the late 1800s. During that period, several famous "experiments" in human behavior were conducted in organizations. Robert Owen, for example, was a textile manufacturer who experimented with "innovations" such as providing breaks and hot meals for his employees. Likewise, the Pullman factory town was seen by many as innovative in its day. Today, of course, what was viewed as an attractive workplace in the 1800s comes across as laughable. For example, at the Boston Herald in the 1870s, a company rule stated that "men employees will be given an evening off each week for courting purposes, or two evenings a week if they go regularly to church."[6]

Up until this point, efforts to improve worker productivity were largely confined to a handful of behavioral tinkerers. But 1900 marked the birth of the first systematic effort to scientifically study human behavior. In fact, for the next 40–50 years, **scientific management** was the dominant behavioral perspective in the U.S. Its champion was Frederick Taylor. An engineer by training, Taylor felt that applying scientific principles to human behavior was a practical and efficient way to maximize firm performance. Just as machines could be designed to optimally perform a certain task, he reasoned, so too could people be taught the ideal way to perform their specific jobs.

Uncovering those "ideal ways" required a systematic analysis. The idea was to observe people doing actual work, discover the "human problems" preventing better performance, and then minimize them by training employees to do things correctly. Taylor conducted many experiments that tested whether worker movements, action sequences, physical positions, and job locations would raise or lower production. For instance, Taylor collected detailed information about how workers loaded coal bins, including how far apart workers kept their feet and how they used their hands to move a shovel. After studying this information, Taylor produced a blueprint for the "best" way to "scientifically" shovel coal. Taylor was willing to do whatever was necessary to organize people in ways that would optimize their output. That usually meant designing very narrow and specific jobs. The role of management was to ensure that employees had the right skills and to insist that they follow correct procedures when performing tasks.[7]

The impact of Taylor's approach endures to this day. But critics suggested that Taylor's view of people was implicitly negative—that "human problems" were the source of all woes. In fact, this reaction to Taylor spawned an alternative movement led by Elton Mayo and others called the **human relations approach.** Mayo felt that the best way to improve production was to respect workers and show concern for their needs. In essence, Mayo's perspective was the opposite of Taylor's "cog-in-the-machine" approach to employees. The human relations approach was popular in the 1920s and remained influential throughout the 1950s. It was also responsible for launching research into topics such as leadership effectiveness and group dynamics.

Perhaps the most famous experiments associated with the human relations perspective were performed at Western Electric's Hawthorne plant in the mid-1920s. Originally designed to investigate the effects of lighting on worker productivity, researchers were puzzled when performance stayed the same or improved no matter what—even when employees were subjected to blinding brightness or virtual darkness. Later studies suggested that this outcome occurred because employees felt that someone cared enough about them to investigate their working conditions. That attention boosted morale and improved employee productivity. Eventually referred to as the **Hawthorne Effect,** the reactions of Western Electric employees were considered the first direct and tangible evidence that people's needs, feelings, and attitudes impact productivity.[8]

While scientific management and the human relations approach both have an enduring legacy, neither is dominant today. Instead, the **contingency approach** holds sway over thinking about organizational behavior. This perspective argues that there's no single best way to manage behavior. What works in any given context depends on the complex interplay between a variety of personal and situational factors. For example, employees' needs and sense of motivation are clearly related to their behavior. But also influential are management's skills, abilities, perceptions, and history of behavior toward employees. Plus, most employees work with others in a team, a department, or a unit. So employees usually behave within a group context of some kind. As a result, group norms, expectations, and cohesiveness—issues we'll tackle later in this book—can impact behavior as well.

Situational factors are also important. Factors internal to the firm might include the corporate culture, the company's procedures, and the organizational structure within which employees work. All can influence individual behavior. Finally, the external context matters too. For example, when a company does poorly in the marketplace, employee morale often suffers and anxiety rises. Many people will shift their attention away from their work and worry instead about being fired or updating their resumes. Likewise, when companies have done well, it can boost employee confidence, if not create an annoying level of hubris (just look at Microsoft!).

In this text we embrace the contingency approach. But we also understand the frustration managers have with it. To many, "it depends" means "you have no answers for me." And in a sense, that's correct. The key to successful behavior management is for *you* to develop the skills needed to find your own answers.

At the same time, we know organizational behavior has an empirical bias that makes everything seem complex. Most scholars in the field rely on the same approaches and data collection methods used in other sciences to conduct research. As a result, knowledge in organizational behavior accumulates incrementally through scientific study, just like it does in physics or biology. That can lead to confusion when studies are viewed superficially and independently. And that promotes an all-too-common reaction to science in general—that there are no clear answers.

But while this is an understandable reaction, it isn't accurate. Being a good consumer of scientific information requires work and effort. Studies that appear inconsistent actually may be presenting a very clear picture, especially when viewed in an integrative fashion. Adopting that integrative approach will be helpful as you go through this book. Each chapter presents studies that collectively will help you unravel the many threads involved in managing behavior effectively.

At a broader level, many people have a difficult time viewing behavior as something that can be "studied" in the first place. And that makes empirical approaches all the more attractive for those of us "in the business." But there's really no substitute for using the basic principles and methods found in all sciences to study behavior in the workplace. While experience, opinions, and common sense are valuable starting points for understanding organizational behavior, they provide notoriously inconsistent information about how to manage people.

One comment we hear often is that effective behavior management is nothing more than common sense. Then why aren't there more good managers? After all, most of us have common sense! But seriously, common sense is usually little more than a post hoc justification for whatever it is that you've already decided to do. In fact, you can find common sense maxims that make diametrically opposed "predictions" about the best course of action to take. For example, say you need to decide whether to make a decision yourself or delegate it to a couple of subordinates. Common sense covers both possibilities with "two heads are better than one" and "too many cooks spoil the broth." So whatever you're doing at work, you can make a case for it with common sense!

A FRAMEWORK FOR EFFECTIVE BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

Now it's time to throw down the proverbial gauntlet. We believe that a contingency approach to organizational behavior can provide a great deal of practical help to managers. In this section we present a framework that will guide your exploration of organizational behavior from a managerial perspective. We've developed this framework, which takes a contingency perspective, as a way of keeping the "big picture" in view. It provides a snapshot of both the skills needed to manage behavior effectively and the general process by which behavior is maintained, changed, or improved. We'll refer to this framework throughout the book.

That said, we want to be clear that our framework is anything but faddish. Instead, we focus on the skills and processes that have stood the test of time when it comes to effectively managing behavior. Our view is that such an approach is more valuable today than ever, especially given the endless onslaught of management fads that firms pursue. Take a look at the accompanying "Fads & Fixes" box to see what we mean.

The Building Block Skills for Managing Behavior

Our view is that four sets of skills provide the building blocks for effective behavior management in organizations. We discuss each of these skill sets in this section.

1. *Outstanding self-insight and perceptual skills.* Excellent managers understand their own behavioral styles and tendencies as well as their unique strengths and weaknesses. They know, for instance, what their preferred style or approach is when leading, resolving conflicts, communicating, and so on. But they also grasp the fact that what's comfortable for

FADS & FIXES

The Bandwagon to Nowhere

We've included a box called "Fads & Fixes" in this book because one of the hallmarks of American management is an unhealthy zeal for fads. Management fads are ideas that come along quickly and burn brightly for a brief time, only to fade into oblivion. In that sense at least, management fads are no different than the hula hoop or the more recent Pokemon craze. Most fads have a "buzz" for a time and plenty of people willingly hop on the bandwagon.

Unfortunately, embracing management fads can have serious and often long-lasting consequences. In addition to the tens of millions of dollars wasted in the mindless pursuit of the latest management gimmicks, companies also must deal with an increasing level of homegrown cynicism and bitterness. The corrosive impact of those attitudes can come back to haunt the company when it has to deal with employees who brush off everything that management does as nothing more than "the program of the month."

And employees have good reason to be skeptical when the boss runs off to implement the latest guru's "wisdom." The most popular management fads and remedies of recent years have had pretty dismal track records. Surveys of the same managers who chase after fads show them admitting to a shocking lack of success, with total quality management (TQM) and reengineering—both wildly popular in recent years—being among the worst offenders.

For example, apparel giant Levi Strauss spent $850 million a few years ago on a disastrous corporate reengineering effort. The person charged with managing the effort had this to say about it: "I don't think we fully accomplished anything, to be honest." Even more current fads, like knowledge management (i.e., that companies need to encapsulate knowledge acquired by key employees and somehow spread it throughout the organization), tend to have poor effectiveness ratings. Already this fad is starting to burn out.

In fact, critics suggest that the more popular a management fad becomes, the more dangerous it is. Bandwagoning is a real problem. Bosses hear a fast-talking consultant tell a few stories and learn that ABC Corp. is trying "X." The next thing you know, consulting firms are cashing big checks and scores of managers are being shipped off to endure jargon-filled training seminars at expensive resorts. In fact, these days a feeding frenzy exists when it comes to management consultants. Some big consulting firms have had to turn down work because they can't hire consultants fast enough. There simply aren't enough freshly minted MBAs from top schools that you can bill out at $200+ an hour! The bottom line is that fads often provide a way for managers to avoid the hard work of figuring out what the company really needs to do in the first place. The most successful companies tend to customize management concepts or come up with their own models to better fit their particular situation. They also tend to do a better job of building support for change and providing the time, money, and resources to see the implementation effort through. Our goal with this book is to give managers the problem-solving and behavioral skills necessary to figure out their own environments and craft their own solutions.[9]

them may not be the best fit in all situations. Likewise, excellent managers are aware of the assumptions that they make about the people around them and how this impacts their decision making. In short, they know what kind of "rose-colored glasses" they use to make sense of their corporate world. Such self-insight helps control, if not eliminate, prejudicial thinking and stereotyping. And that makes managers more open to diversity and better able to consider decisions from different perspectives. Armed with these skills, managers are more accurate when perceiving others. In other words, they are better able to understand what employees have to offer, what motivates them, and why they behave as they do.

2. *The ability to analyze situations correctly.* Effective behavior management also requires the ability to analyze the context accurately. People don't work in a vacuum. They operate in a multilayered organizational situation that includes groups, task requirements, the company culture, and the competitive environment, just to name a few. This is where a contingency perspective clearly comes into play. For example, a manager should know how cohesive a work group is and whether its values are fully aligned with the company's before trying to motivate group members. Why? Because the group may play a major role in how individual employees behave. In short, the group might make motivation more difficult in some cases (e.g., when group norms are strong but inconsistent with company goals) and

easier in others (e.g., when group norms are strong and largely overlap with company goals). Excellent managers are sensitive to the important factors that need to be "sized up" in a situation. They begin by figuring out the management implications of those factors and then design their behavioral strategies to match.

3. *The ability to inspire, motivate, and lead people.* But there's more to behavior management than knowing "what makes other people tick" and being able to diagnose situations. You may have excellent perception and diagnostic skills but still fail to effectively manage behavior. For instance, knowing what motivates subordinates in a particular context is useless unless the manager also has the ability to lead. Of course, there's no fixed set of skills that constitutes that "ability." It might be more accurate to say that a particular constellation of characteristics and skills increases the odds that someone will be successful in a leadership role (e.g., confidence, interpersonal savvy, and so on). And which subset of those characteristics and skills is the most important also varies across situations. Generally speaking, however, "leadership ability" includes being able to develop personal sources of power and then leverage them to influence subordinates in a positive way. And the influence tactics used could range from a rational argument presented in an understandable form to a persuasive vision of the future that appeals to employees' emotions.
4. *Personal flexibility and adaptability.* That brings us to what is often the biggest behavior management challenge. Let's say that you've thought about how to motivate a subordinate and now feel that the best solution requires a behavioral approach that you are uncomfortable with, perhaps because it intersects with one of your weaknesses. For instance, a manager who must help warring subordinates move beyond their interpersonal conflict may decide that a mediation approach is the best way to proceed, despite the fact that imposing a solution feels easier, quicker, and more comfortable. An unwillingness or inability to adapt, especially when it requires stepping outside of a personal "comfort zone," is a big reason why managers sometimes come up short, especially if they otherwise have good skills. Some managers cope by seeking out only those situations where they'll feel comfortable. But these days, few situations are static for long. Change is often unpredictable and rapid, with managers finding their "preferred context" morphing into something else at the drop of a hat. And that means that managers need to be flexible enough to either stretch and challenge themselves in weak areas or leave when the time comes for greener corporate pastures.

The Knowledge Foundation: An Understanding of Organizational Behavior An obvious question at this point is, "So how do I acquire these skills?" One of the best ways to improve, develop, and reinforce these four building block skills is to start with a firm understanding of organizational behavior. If nothing else, studying what organizational behavior has to offer as a field should help you figure out what your strengths and weaknesses are as a manager. And in the long run, managers who have an understanding of the principles and practices that "work" in organizational behavior are more likely to develop the skills they need to be effective in the first place. Such a knowledge arsenal gives managers better insight into their own skills as well as an understanding as to why behavioral challenges occur and how to overcome them.

Self-Insight: The Cornerstone Skill Students often ask us, "OK, but which of the four building block skills is *most* important?" Our response is to reframe the question. In a sense, everything starts with self-insight. Without that cornerstone in place, it's tough to inspire others, develop yourself, and accurately diagnose situations. And sometimes self-insight means that you have to know when to get out of the way.

For example, entrepreneurs sometimes try to make every decision long after the company has grown too big for one person to call all the shots. Jim Clark is a case in point. Clark knew that he most enjoyed being a visionary who created companies. He had trouble grasping day-to-day operations and handling the interpersonal conflicts that went with them. Clark finally reached that insight about himself after 13 difficult years at Silicon Graphics, a company he founded. Along the way, he fought many battles with company managers. But when Clark left Silicon Graphics in 1994 to start Netscape, he stayed in the background when it came to running the business. In fact, Jim Barksdale was brought in as CEO. Soon Clark started yet another new company, Healtheon. Once again, Clark stepped away from operational complexities. Clark's latest venture is MYCFO, a company he founded in 1999 to provide financial services for the wealthy. One of Clark's first moves was to put a management team in place to run the firm.[10]

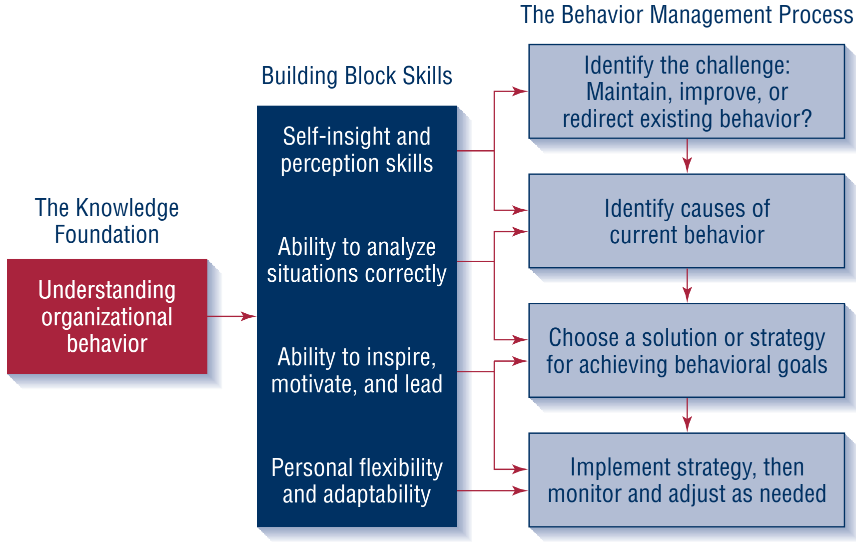
The Behavior Management Process

At this point, we need to connect the building block skills we've been talking about to the *process* of behavior management. In essence, effective behavior management involves a series of basic steps. At each step, one or more of the building block skills must be brought to bear if you are to successfully navigate the ongoing process of managing behavior. This connection between knowledge, skills, and process is illustrated in Exhibit 1–1. Arguably, some building blocks are important at every step in the process (such as self-insight and perception skills). But for the sake of clarity, we've focused only on the most important building blocks for each step. In any event, effective behavior management involves addressing four sets of issues in sequence:

1. *Identify the behavioral challenge: Maintain, improve, or redirect behavior?* This first step requires that managers understand what types of behaviors are critical for outstanding performance in their organizational context. Once that's done, managers should assess whether the behaviors they're currently seeing are consistent with those criteria. And "consistency" can be defined in a variety of ways. For example, if appropriate customer service behaviors are missing, management should redirect employees and encourage a different set of behaviors. On the other hand, good customer service behaviors may be present but may not be performed frequently enough to result in outstanding performance (e.g., record sales and customer retention rates). If so, then the management challenge is to encourage employees to improve what they're already doing. Of course, it's also possible that employees may be doing exactly what they need to do to achieve success. In that case, management's job is to ensure that the

EXHIBIT 1–1

Elements of Successful Behavior Management



environment continues to support such positive behavior. But regardless of what the behavioral challenge is, figuring it out is essentially a perception process. And that means managers need all the self-insight and perception skills they can muster. Without those skills, the odds of coming up with an accurate behavioral assessment are slim indeed.

2. *Identify the causes of current behavior.* After determining the behavioral challenge in step 1, managers must identify what drives employees' current behavior. In part, this means understanding what is important to employees and what motivates them. It also means looking at yourself in the mirror and asking how your goals, skills, and characteristics might be impacting employee behavior. So good perception skills and self-insight continue to be extremely important. This is also the time to start examining how the *context* (e.g., how work is organized, the corporate culture, etc.) might be influencing employee behavior, either alone or in combination with employee and management factors. For instance, if employees are not behaving cooperatively or are otherwise failing to act as a team, consider whether the corporate culture implicitly encourages competition and rewards political gamesmanship. As we said earlier, employees exist in a multilayered environment. And that means that managers must be excellent diagnosticians if they are to accurately identify the causes of employee behavior.
3. *Choose a solution or strategy for achieving behavioral goals.* The third step involves generating options and selecting a strategy for maintaining, improving, or redirecting behavior. Of course, managers' analytical and diagnostic skills remain critical here, especially as they pertain to devising possible alternatives for responding to behavioral challenges. It's at this point that a thorough grasp of what theories and practices "work" in organizational behavior proves helpful. Managers are able to generate better solutions if they know what organizational behavior has to offer and

can accurately weigh the pros and cons of alternatives within the demands of the context. And in many cases, managers won't be doing that alone. They might consult with peers, superiors, and subordinates or lead a group charged with responding to the behavioral challenges facing the unit or company. So when generating options and choosing strategies, managers may have to persuade and inspire those involved in the decision-making process. Plus, once a solution or strategy is selected, managers may have to convince others of its merits before implementation can proceed. Of course, this presumes that managers' inspiring, motivating, and leading skills are up to the task.

4. *Implement the strategy, then monitor and adjust as needed.* In many ways, this last step is the toughest of all. Implementation means that managers must develop a clear time frame for taking specific action steps. Managers also must be prepared to inspire, persuade, and motivate subordinates to embrace the steps necessary to actually modify existing behavior. Plus, it may be that the steps required fall outside managers' personal styles or comfort zones. Managers need to be prepared for that possibility and able respond in an adaptive fashion. In addition, things rarely go exactly as planned. Ideally, managers should try to anticipate what might go wrong and develop some contingencies for dealing with them. Monitoring behavior and making adjustments as needed are usually necessary as well. Overall, this final step puts managers' leadership, flexibility, and adaptability to the test.

Keep the framework illustrated in Exhibit 1–1 in mind as you go through this book. In each chapter we'll refer back to the skills and behavior management steps in the framework that are relevant to the issues being discussed. The first part of this book discusses issues that involve the employee as an individual and the underlying causes of behavior, such as attitudes and motivation. The middle part of this book applies our framework to behavioral issues surrounding groups and relationships, such as teams, leadership, power, and conflict management. The final part of this book takes the broadest perspective in examining how structure and culture, among other things, can impact organizational behavior.

KEY TRENDS THAT WILL IMPACT BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT

The backdrop to all the issues we'll explore in this book is change. In fact, the world of work is being reshaped—along with the people who are in it. For a snapshot of how thinking about corporations has changed, take a look at Exhibit 1–2. It illustrates how perspectives regarding companies and employees have shifted—at least for some. Granted, perspectives can lag reality and be overblown to begin with. So we need to take them with a grain of salt. Nevertheless, these perspectives reflect, or are pushing, real changes that are taking place in many firms. Some changes represent evolutionary trends that, while relatively slow moving, are already having a big impact. A good example is the aging work force. On the other hand, pressures toward globalization and the mind-boggling pace of developments in information technology are forcing revolutionary changes in companies. Such changes—which can blindside

EXHIBIT 1–2

Crossing the Millennium Divide: How Perspectives on Corporations Have Changed

Feature	20th Century Perspective	21st Century Perspective
The organization	A pyramid	A network
Sources of strength	Structure, stability, independence	Flexibility, change, linkages
Key resources	Physical assets	Information
Operations	Vertically integrated	Virtually integrated
Product emphasis	Mass production	Mass customization
Reach	Domestic	Global
Strategy development	Led from the top	Led from the bottom
Leadership style	Dogmatic, by the numbers	Inspirational, emotional
Workers	Employees desiring security	Free agents desiring growth
Corporate motivation	To compete, vanquish rivals	To build something great
Improvements	Incremental	Revolutionary

Adapted from: Byrne, J. A. (2000). Management by web. *Business Week,* August 28, 87.

unprepared companies, industries, and even nations—are affecting employees in ways that would have been hard to imagine a few years ago. In this section, we take a brief look at some trends that have major implications for organizational behavior. Doing so will underscore our point that the ingredients for successful behavior management presented in Exhibit 1–1 are becoming more important than ever.

Increasing Work Force Diversity

As we said in our opening box, the aging work force poses some big challenges, especially when younger managers must interact with older employees. But the work force is becoming increasingly diverse in other ways as well. Over two-thirds of the growth in the work force is being driven by women and various racial or ethnic minorities. This mirrors demographic shifts in the entire U.S. population. For instance, by 2050 people of Hispanic descent will represent 25 percent of the population, up from 10 percent in 1995. At the same time, the share for non-Hispanic whites will drop to around 50 percent from over 70 percent in 1995.[11]

The increasing internationalization of business is bringing people from a variety of cultural backgrounds together and producing a variety of challenges in the process. Due to the strong U.S. economy and low unemployment rates, companies are recruiting immigrants more aggressively than ever. And that goes beyond jobs requiring specific scientific and technical skills. Companies are also looking to immigrants to help them fill service jobs in hotels, restaurants, and the like, luring them with better pay and even signing bonuses in some cases.[12]

Overall, these economic pressures are forcing companies to take another look at people who traditionally have been ignored, shut out, or otherwise discriminated against in the work force. That's true for ethnic and racial minorities as well as those who are gay or disabled. These traditionally overlooked individuals represent incredibly valuable pools of employee talent, although many managers still fail to recognize this because their own biases and assumptions get in the way.

Having a diverse work force can help firms relate better to an increasingly diverse customer base. African-Americans, Asians, and Hispanics together

CULTURE CLASH

(In)visible on the Net

Clearly, the Internet is here to stay. In fact, one survey of North American CEOs found that nearly 80 percent believe that firms have "fundamentally changed" the way they operate because of the Internet. And in the process, the Internet may help bypass some of the culture clashes that occur in "bricks and mortar" businesses. In short, in a physical transaction, buyers and sellers see and hear each other. Put simply, they interact directly. This interaction process, unfortunately, can trigger stereotypes. For instance, African-American entrepreneurs tell stories of how customers avoid them and seek out white store clerks instead, assuming that the whites own the place. In fact, one owner of a Seattle-based package-delivery business recalls being told by a white customer, "I'm going to watch you wrap my package," ostensibly some sort of racially tinged, antitheft warning.

But many African-American entrepreneurs have been able to sidestep these difficulties on the Internet. For instance, the Seattle business owner has started an online venture to sell underwear. As she puts it, customers make decisions based ". . . on what the boxer shorts look like, not on who's selling them." Likewise, ex-car salesman Roosevelt Gist remembers white customers being turned off by his African-American heritage and asking for another salesperson. Gist has sidestepped these racial barriers by starting www.autonetwork.com, an online forum for researching, buying, and selling cars. After four years, Gist was receiving some 40,000 hits a month and about $200,000 in annual advertising revenues—not bad for an initial investment of $6,000! And Gist's heritage was largely unknown to his web page visitors.

Later, Gist decided that he wanted to target African-American customers. Once again, he turned to the Internet, this time using it to make his heritage highly visible. Gist set up the African-American Car Buyer's Guide at www.aacbg.com. By doing so, Gist was tapping into the frustration many African-Americans experience when car shopping at dealerships—being treated poorly because of race. Thanks to the Internet, Gist's vision is just a few clicks away from African-American customers everywhere.[14]

accounted for nearly $700 billion in purchasing power in 2000. Financial service companies are taking note of this, scrambling to recruit people who can connect them to these segments of the customer base that can no longer be ignored. Often, this means trying to hire more women and minorities.[13] Take a look at the accompanying "Culture Clash" box for some examples of how technology can help firms reach customers and avoid the effects of stereotyping in the process.

The bottom line is that companies can't afford employees with antiquated attitudes and behaviors. Decisions are increasingly being made in cross-functional teams and task forces—simultaneously increasing the chances that people from diverse backgrounds will be brought together and making their effective interaction all the more important.[15]

Of course, managers are on the front lines when it comes to effectively motivating and leading diverse groups of people. And if you think about Exhibit 1–1 in this context, the challenges involved and the skills managers need are clear. Diversity issues put a premium on managers' perception and diagnostic skills. Managers not only have to get past their own biases, but they also must distinguish between the diverse motives, perspectives, and values that may exist among employees. In fact, diversity increases the potential for conflict and misunderstanding, at least initially. Fortunately, organizational behavior can help managers understand that the challenges of diversity can be met and that there are excellent business reasons for doing so. These reasons are summarized in Exhibit 1–3.[16]

A look back at Exhibit 1–1 underscores the importance of the corporate context in explaining why managing diversity issues often proves difficult. Many firms still have a long way to go in creating an environment in which diversity is taken seriously. According to one survey, less than 10 percent of the companies responding thought that they did a very good job of supporting diversity. And the costs of failure can be quite high. Turnover rates among

EXHIBIT 1–3

Diversity and the Bottom Line: Leveraging Opportunities

Business Reason for Diversity	Explanation
Better use of employee talent	Companies noted for workplace diversity are better able to recruit, retain, and promote people from various demographic groups.
Increased understanding of the marketplace	Understanding diverse customer groups is a powerful marketing advantage for companies.
More in-depth understanding among top executives	A diverse talent pool of management talent increases the depth and breadth of environmental and world understanding, making competitive success more likely.
Enhanced creativity	Increased diversity means more varied experiences and perspectives are available to the corporation, thereby enhancing the firm's ability to perform creative tasks.
Improved quality of team problem-solving	Heterogeneous teams tend to be more innovative and produce higher quality decisions, despite the fact that they tend to have more difficulties working together at the onset than homogeneous groups.

Adapted from: Robinson, G., and Dechant, K. (1997). Building a business case for diversity. *Academy of Management Executive,* 11, 21–31.

African-Americans exceed those of whites by some 40 percent. Likewise, turnover rates for women are much higher than those for men (twice as high according to some estimates)—even when child-bearing years are factored out. Of course, recruiting and training replacements is expensive, running into six figures for some occupations.[17]

Increasing Internationalization and Technological Sophistication

As we've suggested, many diversity issues are a byproduct of the fact that businesses have increasingly moved into the international arena. For example, between 1993 and 1999, the share of total sales coming from foreign markets increased 88 percent for General Electric, 28 percent for McDonald's, and 1,400 percent for Wal-Mart.[18] Plus, technological advances in transportation, telecommunications, and manufacturing have created new international markets and made it easier to conduct business across countries.

But the blessings of technology also bring challenges, if not curses. Information technology "follows" employees everywhere, causing stress and making "getting away" a thing of the past—unless they leave their gadgets behind. Then there's the challenge of how to use what technology makes possible—like the virtual teams companies deploy to help connect their people around the world. And sometimes technology produces waste and inefficiencies. Think about that the next time you're sitting at your office computer surfing the Net, playing games, or going through an electronic mailbox stuffed with superfluous messages![19]

Plus, many international business problems, such as cultural differences, political uncertainty, corruption, trade disputes, and financial mismanagement, are not easily addressed with technology. In fact, technology can accelerate the speed at which crises hit countries. And as the importance of international commerce rises, the impact of those crises is more severe.[20]

The speed at which developing Asian nations like Indonesia were struck by economic crisis shocked the world a few years ago. But this was nothing new, nor was it the first time that technology played a role in the speed with which a crisis hit. For example, investors in 1994, panicked by Mexico's inability to pay off foreign debts, sent the peso plummeting overnight as they electronically moved their funds elsewhere. That caused ripple effects worldwide as money was electronically ripped from many emerging markets in a matter of days. Technology makes it possible for investors to move billions into—or out of—a country in minutes. In fact, over $1 trillion in currency is traded *daily* worldwide.[21]

And big currency gyrations have caused international companies to view their operations as modular. In other words, when things get tough in one place, you move. For instance, in 1999, a 35 percent drop in the value of Brazil's currency suddenly made it cheaper to do business there, especially relative to its neighbor, Argentina. Overnight, Argentina's goods became comparatively more expensive and much less attractive to Brazilian consumers. As a result, over 20 major companies pulled up stakes and moved across the border, eliminating thousands of jobs and plunging Argentina into a recession in 2000.[22]

So while technology has helped stitch national economies together, it also has helped make international business a volatile proposition. Naturally, firms try to minimize that volatility. For example, one way to reduce the impact of currency fluctuations is to scatter facilities and suppliers across many countries. But this strategy also increases the challenge of managing people from diverse cultures.[23]

What's also driving the increasing complexity of international management is that companies need innovative and productive employees in order to compete. And companies often find those employees abroad, where labor costs can be much lower. For example, credit card operations for some American firms are now located in low-wage Jamaica, thanks to satellite technology. Likewise, U.S. companies like Intel, New York Life, and Analog Devices have flocked to Ireland thanks to its relatively inexpensive labor and excellent telecommunications infrastructure. Dozens of U.S. firms such as IBM also do much of their software programming in India to take advantage of skilled local programmers and lower wages.

So what happens if management decides that China (or any other place) is a good place to produce a product or deliver a service? Does the context of that location impact the way behavior should be managed? Absolutely. The same things that impact employee behavior in the U.S.—things like business practices and cultural values—can vary dramatically from country to country. Once again, to meet those challenges, managers need all of the skills outlined in Exhibit 1–1. As you'll see throughout this book, the failure to manage cultural differences in international business can cost companies dearly.

Likewise, the failure to manage the context well is a major reason why companies often fall short of reaching their most coveted goal—that of coming up with new breakthrough innovations. Of course, people are the key to new products and technologies that truly leapfrog anything being done today. But like the international arena, managers need to understand that, when it comes to innovation, the context matters. And what's especially interesting about the creative process is that the environment necessary for innovation can be nurtured and encouraged by management. But as you'll see in the accompanying "Succeeding Outside the Lines" box, accomplishing that may first require managers to adjust their perspective regarding behavior.

SUCCEEDING OUTSIDE THE LINES

Managing "Voila!"

Is "managing innovation" an oxymoron? You might think so. Nevertheless, successful innovation is about managing people. Let's start by defining "innovation." We're not talking about incremental improvements—like building a smaller cell phone next year. That's the kind of thing that might evolve from holding focus groups with your customers. And it does have value. But we're referring here to radical breakthroughs that have "new to the world" aspects to them. For example, in 1903, Dayton, Ohio, natives Wilbur and Orville Wright changed transportation—and the world—forever with the first successful powered flight.

That flight was years in the making. And that's still true today. So managers shouldn't be surprised by time frames of 15–20 years or longer for breakthrough inventions. For instance, the first mile-high skyscraper was designed in 1956. But until recently, elevator technology was limited to about 130 stories, thus precluding taller structures. Any higher and the elevator cables would snap due to their own weight. At last, after 40 years of study, Otis Elevator announced in 1998 that it had developed a breakthrough prototype that would finally solve that engineering challenge—a tracked system with no cables and horizontal "turnouts" that allow cabs to pass each other.

Of course, taking a decades-long view is tough—if not impossible—for most managers to embrace. And that's precisely the point. One of the secrets to managing innovation is to change management's perspective. Successful breakthroughs rarely follow a consistent evolutionary path. Instead, they are often the result of a cycle of fits and starts. For instance, GE's digital X-ray machines were the result of research that started in the 1970s and wound its way through five separate directions before being perfected in the late 1990s. Many successful projects go through such hills and valleys; one year they are cut completely and the next they are restored, perhaps in a different form. The breakthrough ultimately results from a "probe and learn" process that involves slowly piecing together the things that work. It also requires project "champions"—believers who are willing to stick their necks out to protect and fight for the vision until it can be fully realized.

At this point you're probably wondering, "How in the heck do you 'manage' something so unpredictable?" In part, the answer is to allow the unpredictable to happen. This can be accomplished by fostering a **breakthrough culture.** In other words, the corporate value system has to recognize that normal business rules and pressures don't apply to breakthrough thinking. As one expert puts it, "Managers have to understand that bean-counter measures are meaningless." Instead, managers have to embrace an incubator metaphor. The idea is to foster a culture where innovative thinking is supported "outside of the box" of normal business operations.

Another important element is to support the free flow of ideas, both inside and outside the firm. In fact, informal networking is often the key to big innovations. The most successful people in the innovation game are those who have cultivated wide-ranging networks of colleagues. Some of that networking and idea-generating behavior can be taught. For instance, successful product designer Ideo Corporation (www.ideo.com) now offers seminars to outside firms on this very topic. The idea is to perfect the art of brainstorming and the prototyping of new products and technologies. That often involves coming up with something—anything—that might lead to the next step in the breakthrough process.[24]

Work and Family: Managing the Juggling Act

At this point, you might be thinking that having to continuously adapt to shifting demographics, constantly changing technologies, and a volatile international environment is a lot to ask. Perhaps, you might respond, it's simply too much. That "enough is enough" mentality isn't surprising, especially for those who have family demands on top of it all.

Workplace Demands Are Increasing That's especially the case for college-educated employees across a variety of professional occupations. Over the past 20 years, the proportion of such employees working over 50 hours weekly has jumped roughly 30 percent.[25] And technology may be making things worse. Some estimates suggest that employees with the latest information technology spend 25 percent more of "their time" working than everyone else.[26] And among the 80 percent of employees working 50 hours or more who say they want to work fewer hours, 25 percent would take a pay cut to make that happen.[27]

Work-Family Conflicts Are Increasing Increased work loads spill over into family life. Plus, family structures have shifted, squeezing the time available for any nonwork activity. For example, in the last three decades, the proportion of dual-career married couples has gone from 36 percent to 60 percent. Likewise, the number of single parents with children has risen sharply. And kids aren't the only "family issue." By 2005, 40 percent of American workers will worry more about how to care for an aging parent than a child.[28] Many employees already have to patch together a fragile network of relatives to care for elderly parents. Such arrangements are stressful, prone to break down, and can negatively impact employee performance.[29]

Helping People Juggle It All These trends present challenges for management. For example, in 1995 living costs were the main reason employees turned down transfers. Today, 75 percent of rejected transfers are due to family issues. Some employees commute home weekly from jobs hundreds of miles away just to avoid uprooting their kids. But those long-distance commutes can increase stress and undercut performance—outcomes that hurt the firm.[30]

In many cases, how work-family battles unfold depends on whether the manager involved can see the connection between work-family issues and employee effectiveness. And seeing that connection requires good perception and diagnostic skills, as outlined in Exhibit 1–1. There's plenty of evidence that managers who recognize the value of creative accommodations can reap big dividends in employee loyalty and performance. Sure, the company can make things easier by offering flexible hours, telecommuting options, on-site day care centers, and elder care benefits. But when it comes down to it, managers still have tremendous leverage—for good or ill. For example, "family-friendly" programs don't work if people don't use them because their boss will question their commitment if they do. Companies should do more to develop managers who can recognize work-family problems and craft informal and flexible solutions in response. In short, flexible and adaptable managers may be the best antidote for work-family challenges.[31]

BEHAVIOR AND THE BOTTOM LINE: A SUMMARY OF ACTION STEPS

1. Understand that great—and well-managed—employees are the defining factors that make for outstanding companies over the long haul.
2. Overall, take a contingency perspective on the causes of behavior in organizations. Try to become an educated consumer of the scientific literature in the field.
3. Think about ways to improve your building block skills in the four key areas that are critical for effective behavior management: (a) self-insight and perception; (b) the ability to inspire, motivate, and lead others; (c) the ability to analyze situations correctly; and (d) personal flexibility and adaptability. Understanding the field of organizational behavior provides an essential knowledge foundation and will help you develop these skills.
4. Understand the four basic steps in the behavior management process and the skills most important for the successful navigation of each step. Recognize that the first part of the process really involves identifying behaviors that are critical for achieving outstanding performance and organizational goals. Only then can you decide whether the challenge facing you is to maintain, improve, or redirect employee behavior. That has to be done before you can analyze why employees behave in the way that they do. After that, you can chose a behavior management strategy and begin to implement it.
5. Recognize the intersecting challenges that increasing diversity, internationalization, and work-family dilemmas pose for effective behavior management.

WILL IT WORK?

Managing the New Workaholics

At the beginning of this chapter, we presented some of the challenges that companies face as the work force ages. We hinted that the solution to many of these challenges is an approach to management that embraces all the positives that older employees have to offer while at the same time blunting some of the negatives. In a word, this means *accommodating* older employees' needs with some judicious adjustments in the workplace.

Vita Needle is a good example. This Boston-based manufacturer makes needles—for everything from embalming corpses to blowing up soccer balls. The firm is known for its innovative approach to managing older employees. And something must be working, since the average employee is 73. Initially, Vita Needle focused on hiring retirees from other firms—mostly on a part-time basis—to cut labor costs. But now the company feels that it can be nimbler and cheaper than its rivals because of the quality of its "old folks" work force. Owner Fred Hartman claims that his older employees are more loyal, more flexible, and harder working than anyone else.

So how does Vita Needle do it? First, the company promotes its "senior-friendly" culture when hiring. A recent recruitment ad boasted that the firm has no retirement age, has never had layoffs, and employs "predominantly senior citizens." Then there's training and trust. All production employees have been cross-trained so that they can do any of the jobs necessary to make company products. That flexibility comes in handy when the firm tries to accommodate all the vacation time that workers use in the summer (typically to spend with school-age grandchildren). All employees are also given keys to the plant so they can start work when they want. Many older employees like to start before dawn and finish up before mid-day.

Some of the other accommodations Vita Needle has made are likely to raise eyebrows. For instance, when the firm was offered a newer and more efficient factory a mere 20 miles away from its current facility, Fred Hartman turned it down. He knew that his employees had sunk deep roots in the community and that 50 percent would have quit had the plant relocated. In addition to mobility issues, the company has been slow to introduce new technology—in part because of fears among its older employees. Computerization of some operations is coming, but the company is moving in small steps. That tolerance of technophobia is controversial. But Vita Needle still thinks that by trusting, training, and accommodating its older employees, the company will come out ahead. A poster hanging in Vita Needle sums up the company philosophy this way: "Remember, old people are worth a fortune—with silver in their hair, gold in their teeth, stones in their kidneys, lead in their feet, and gas in their stomachs."

Nevertheless, what concerns do you have about the Vita Needle example? How might these accommodations work—or not—in a larger company? Or a company with a smaller percentage of older workers? What about companies in high-tech industries? How can management hassles between older and younger employees be avoided or dealt with?[32]

SKILLS ASSESSMENT ASSESSING YOUR SELF-INSIGHT AND PERCEPTION SKILLS

Overview In this chapter, we've highlighted self-insight and perception skills as "cornerstones" of effective management. The Perception Process Questionnaire should help you better understand yourself and provide a good measure of your perception skills.

The Perception Process Questionnaire (PPQ) The Perception Process Questionnaire (PPQ) is designed to help you evaluate your current level of perception skills. If you do not have experience in a management level position, consider a project you have worked on either in the classroom or in an organization such as a fraternity, sorority, club, church, or service group. You will find that the questions are applicable to your own experience even if you are not yet a manager.

Use the following scale to rate the frequency with which you perform the behaviors described in each question. Place the corresponding number (1–7) in the blank space preceding the statement.

1. Rarely
2. Irregularly
3. Occasionally
4. Usually
5. Frequently
6. Almost Always
7. Consistently

____ **1.** I search for verified facts and observations to support inferences or conclusions.

____ **2.** I examine available information related to my area of job responsibility.

____ **3.** I note organizational changes and policies that might affect my information.

____ **4.** I ask others for their opinions and observations to get access to more information.

____ **5.** I note inconsistencies and seek explanations for them.

____ **6.** I look at information in terms of similarities and differences.

____ **7.** I generate possible explanations for available information.

____ **8.** I check for omissions, distortions, or exaggerations in available information.

____ **9.** I verbally summarize data that are not completely quantified (e.g., trends).

____ **10.** I distinguish facts from opinions.

____ **11.** I am aware of my own style of approaching problems and how this might affect the way I process information.

____ **12.** I put quantitative information in tables, charts, and graphs.

____ **13.** I am aware of the personality characteristics of my peers, colleagues, subordinates, and superiors.

____ **14.** I am aware of my own biases and value systems that influence the way I see people.

____ **15.** I am aware of patterns of people's performance and how these patterns might indicate characteristics.

____ **16.** I recognize differences and similarities among people.

____ **17.** I actively seek to determine how pieces of information might be related.

____ **18.** I relate current information to past experience.

____ **19.** I relate my own attitudes and feelings and those of others to job performance.

____ **20.** I relate work methods to outcomes.

PPQ Scoring The scoring sheet in Exhibit A summarizes your responses for the PPQ. It will help you identify your existing strengths and pinpoint areas that need improvement. Right now, fill in the assessment column for each skill area by adding your scores for each item. Add the five category scores to obtain a total score. Enter that total score in the space indicated.

PPQ Evaluation Exhibit B shows score lines for your total score and for each category measured on the PPQ.

EXHIBIT A The Perception Process Questionnaire (PPQ) Scoring

Skill Area	Items	Assessment
Searching for information	1,2,3,4	
Interpreting and comprehending information	5,6,7,8	
Determining essential factors	9,10,11,12	
Recognizing characteristics of people	13,14,15,16	
Identifying relationships	17,18,19,20	
	TOTAL SCORE =	

Each line shows a continuum from the lowest possible score to the highest. Place a "x" where your personal score falls on each of these lines. The score lines in Exhibit B show graphically where you stand with regard to five areas of perception. If you have been honest with yourself, you now have a better idea of your relative strengths and weaknesses in the categories of behavior that make up perception skills.

EXHIBIT B The Perception Process Questionnaire (PPQ) Evaluation

Total Score

Lowest score ——— 20 50 80 110 140 ——— Highest score

Category Scores

Searching for information: 4 10 16 22 28

Interpreting and comprehending information: 4 10 16 22 28

Determining essential factors: 4 10 16 22 28

Recognizing characteristics of people: 4 10 16 22 28

Identifying relationships: 4 10 16 22 28

Adapted from: Fandt, P. M. (1994). *Management Skills: Practice and Experience.* St. Paul, MN: West Publishing, pp. 210–213.

EXPERIENCING MANAGEMENT THE AWFUL INTERVIEW EXERCISE

Purpose The purpose of this exercise is to practice interviewing skills, especially regarding difficult interview questions. We also want to continue the self-insight development process by increasing your awareness of the strengths and weaknesses you bring to the interviewing process.

Introduction Employment interviews are frequently traumatic experiences; interviewers know what they are looking for, and you don't. They are prepared, and you are not. They are relaxed, and you are tense. The cards are all stacked in the interviewer's favor, it seems.

Interviewers are also notorious for asking disconcerting questions: "Tell me about your goals in life." "Why do you want to work for International Widgets?" If you answered such questions candidly, but right off the top of your head, you might never get a job. ("My only goal is to get a job so I can begin to find out whether I really like it," or "I want to work for International Widgets because I don't have any other likely looking offers right now.") If you have been confronted with questions such as these, you will understand why we have titled this exercise, "The Awful Interview."

You don't have to let interviewers catch you by surprise. This exercise is based on the assumption that practice can help you prepare for interview situations. We will also assume that honesty really is the best policy. The job-hunter who concentrates on giving a prospective employer the impression that she or he is just the person wanted is employing a defensive strategy. You may become so preoccupied with projecting an "image" that you have little energy left for the real problem of showing the interviewer what careful thought you have given to planning your career.

Procedure **Step 1: 15 minutes.** The entire group will develop a list of the 10 *most awful questions* one can be asked in a job interview. An "awful" question is one that you would find threatening or difficult to answer honestly in a job interview. When the list is completed write down the 10. You will need them in the remainder of the exercise. List only questions that have actually been asked in all seriousness in job interviews you or somebody else has experienced.

Step 2: 5 minutes. The group leader will specify whether the total group should break into smaller groups of threes or fours. Choose people with whom you will be comfortable, people who can be most helpful in providing useful feedback on your interviewing style. When the groups are formed, the group leader will tell you where you are to hold your small group meetings.

Step 3: 45 to 60 minutes. Meet with your trio or quartet. Proceed as follows: One member volunteers to answer the first question: another is chosen to ask the question. Choosing a question from the list of the 10 most awful, the interrogator asks the interviewee the first question. The interviewee must try to *answer the question as truthfully and honestly as possible.*

After the answer, other members of the group provide feedback to the interviewee on how they experienced the answer just given.

Upon completion of the feedback, the interviewee becomes the interrogator, chooses a question and a new interviewee, and a new round begins. Continue taking turns until each person has answered at least three questions, or until you are instructed by the group leader to stop.

Step 4: 10 minutes. Take 10 minutes and write a brief note to yourself covering the following (this note is for you—nobody else will see it) : What questions did I handle well? What were my strengths? What questions did I handle poorly? What questions asked of others would give me problems? What can I do to deal more effectively with the questions that give me problems?

Step 5. Reconvene with the entire group for discussion of the exercise.

Discussion Questions

1. What did you learn during the exercise about how to answer an interviewer's questions more effectively?
2. Do you think employment interviewers obtain valid data in the interview? Why?
3. If you were an interviewer, what kinds of questions would you ask?

Adapted from: Bowen, D. D. (1997). The awful interview. In Bowen, D.D., R. J. Lewicki, D. T. Hall, and F. S. Hall (eds.), *Experiences in management and organizational behavior,* 4th ed. New York: Wiley, 301–304.

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