Topics for a Manuscript in Behavioral Management

1. The Customer is Not Always Right—I’ve seen too many customers who hadn’t a clue about what they wanted, or worse, who deliberately fibbed when the nice survey taker asked them what they'd like. In addition, customers can't see the future. Nobody in 1940, listening to a furniture-sized radio, ever said, "Gosh, this is nice; but what I think I'd like instead would be a Sony Walkman." For example, advertising agency personnel know that the kind of advertising asked for by a client's ad manager (often someone recycled out of sales) isn't usually the advertising best calculated to move the product.

2. Too Much Quality Can Ruin An Organization—Quality has become a kind of Holy Grail, chased after by almost everyone. Organizations assume their idea of quality is synonymous with the customer's. It may not be. And when it's not, consumers are bombarded with quality they never asked for, didn't want, and aren't about to pay for (let alone pay a premium for). Find out what the customer/consumer's idea of quality is and limit the quality control to their ideas. This will reduce excessive expense used on unnecessary quality control.

3. Disruptive People Can Be an Asset—They are the irritating grains of sand that, in the case of oysters, every now and then produce a pearl. Disruptive people precipitate breakthroughs, sometimes by forcing an uncomfortable reexamination of comfortable assumptions. Their favorite question is, "Why?" When everybody else is too afraid (or too lazy) to ask it, they ask. These people are the change agents. And change agents aren't supposed to be liked. They're supposed to effect change, which never is an easy or attractive undertaking. A fair number of our Founding Fathers could be labeled disruptive (a.k.a. revolutionaries). Original thinkers—disruptive people unafraid to challenge conventional wisdom—are a powerful asset. "Always stay in with the outs." These are the people who guide the future.

4. Teamwork Isn't Always Good—I'll rephrase that: teamwork can be good. Teams prefer the safe, the familiar, the middle of the road, the well researched. They fear originality. Left to their own devices, groups devote far more time and effort to the practice of teamsmanship (promoting group harmony, compromise, smoothing and protecting everybody's ego) than they do to working. "A camel is a horse designed by a committee" gets at this idea.

5. When Everybody Else Is Doing It, Don't—The management profession is driven by fashion: conglomerates are in, everyone is making minivans; disaster movies are the hit; tartar control toothpaste is the thing. Everyone is opening a plant in China.
Maybe you should, too—but not because everybody else is doing it. Concentrate frequently on breaking the mold. Deviating from what everyone else is doing can result in new discoveries, new methods, and product innovations which can result in more profitable results. The new VW Beetle (and it really isn't the old Beetle, mechanically, stylistically, or colorwise) is a standout, a kind of breakthrough product thought of as a category-buster. Betting on a category-buster takes guts and therefore marketers often settle for what seems a safer course: making incremental changes in existing products. Take Crest, toothpaste. There's Original Flavor; there's Mint. There's Normal Crest as opposed to Tartar Control Formula. Indeed we have Crest in a paste format as well as in a gel. Incremental change.

6. The Bad News About Diversity and Multiculturalism—In some organizations managing diversity has unintended negative consequences. For example, when companies develop special programs to encourage women and minorities, majority males often feel they are left out or treated unfairly. Affirmative action programs that give preferential treatment to certain groups may stigmatize individuals from those groups if others feel their qualifications are substandard. Management that brings in increased numbers of women and minorities, yet fails to appreciate and reward their contributions, engenders tension throughout the organization. Dr. Von has several articles on diversity in his vita.

7. Your Best Ain't Good Enough—Best is a non-specific goal that leads to lower performance levels than hard specific goals. Dr. Von wrote an article about this in the 1970s; see his vita.

8. No Good Deed Goes Unpunished—Frequently in business managers inadvertently punish good performance; for example, someone who does good work at completing reports is given all the reports to do; offering suggestions at meetings frequently results in the person offering the suggestion (good deed) being required to implement the recommendation in addition to his or her other responsibilities (punishment). See Mirror Management article in Dr. Von’s vita.

9. The Primary Purpose of Business is Not to Make Money—Companies that do make a lot of money almost never have as their goal “making a lot of money.” They tend to be run by enthusiasts who, in the normal course of gratifying their own tastes and curiosities, come up with products or services so startling, so compelling, and so exciting that customers practically rip their trouser pockets reaching for their wallets. One key purpose of business should be to make the best product on the market at a competitive price.
10. Financial Controls Are Bad—As constituted now, finance and accounting are much too obsessed with imposing tight controls. Tight controls do harm in two ways. First, they can jeopardize an organization's ability to exploit big opportunities. For example, a few years ago a car was getting murdered in the market because it lacked a then high-tech cassette tape deck. It was a matter of spending $40,000 (the cost of engineering and tooling for the tape deck) in order to protect an $8 million business. Finance balked. Second, because measurements are based on past performance, controls tend to sanctify the status quo. They promote a false sense of orderliness and predictability. The future seems only a matter of extrapolation, prompting managers to say such things as, "That can't happen; it's not in the five-year plan." Western businesses have been too much a slave to centralized control, micromanagement, and to quantitative analysis as exemplified in an overuse of financial controls. Overuse of financial controls can also demoralize employees and thwart innovative thinkers.

11. A Little Fear in Organizations Isn't All That Bad—Fear caused by a manager's capricious, personal whims or self-serving delusions of grandeur have no place at all in today's business world. Legitimate fear does have usefulness: e.g., of letting down one's team, of bringing embarrassment on oneself or one's family, and the very rational fear of what the competition will do to you if you let your guard down. That kind of fear should never, ever be ignored or sublimated, because if it is, you can bet that an even bigger fear will soon arise to take its place: fear of survival. Fear keeps an organization awake, on its toes, a little nervous—all of which protects it from falling prey to the FDH (fat, dumb, and happy) syndrome. Tension and conflict are necessary ingredients of a healthy company.

12. What Our Economy Needs are More Nerds—Engineers, computer science folks, and anybody competent in math or the hard sciences is depicted as a doofus or nerd. Our economy, however, is riding on the ability to manufacture things—a process to which engineers, manufacturing professionals, and other scientists are essential. Yet our young—most especially the best and brightest—turn up their noses at stodgy old engineering or manufacturing and scamper off to, say, law school. Our society has denigrated making things yet in Japan and in Europe engineers are revered almost as if they were gods. Engineers and scientists were and are exalted personages in many parts of the world—parts of the world that will be key competitors in our global economy. We need to glamorize "making things" as opposed to merely "making things."

13. Psychobabble: You Can Be Whatever You Want to Be—This is a big lie propagated by the same people who probably feel that protecting an individual's self-esteem should take precedent over objective reality of the individual's work or
academic performance. Telling people that there is nothing that they cannot do may lead to increased positive self-image but the self-esteem thus created is, to be blunt, phony and ephemeral. It vanishes the moment the student or the employee hits the real world and is challenged by cues from reality feedback whose basic message is: "In some respect or other you are not who you think you are." If this contradiction exceeds one’s comfort zone, the image is threatened and the usual response is defense. And defensive behavior requires energy expenditure that could be freed and available for more constructive pursuits, such as contributing more productively and creatively to one's organization, family, and community. There seems to be an optimal level for people not to become overly optimistic or pessimistic. Extremely exaggerated views of the self (especially when reinforced by such statements as you can be anything you want to be) may be associated with poor reality testing, as seen in episodes of mania, grandiosity, and delusions of infallibility. For instance, employees with very high self-esteem may not be able to accept criticism about their performance; they may attribute such criticism to prejudice or envy, and their subsequent performance will suffer. A person may not be able to do anything they want, but they can succeed if they recognize their talents, capabilities, and adopt goals that are compatible with them.

14. Why the Golden Rule Isn’t A Good Management Strategy—Treating others as we want to be treated is not the best policy; treat others as they want to be treated. See article in Dr. Von’s vita on this topic.

15. On the Importance of Followership—there seems to be an exaggerated amount of interest in leadership and it is important to remember that followers are likewise important. Followers often give leaders new insights which improve their leader's leadership qualities.

16. "If It Ain't Broke, Don't Fix It": An Improper Management Philosophy—many managers feel that you should not mess with success and leave things alone when everything is going well. To help break old thought patterns such as this and substitute new, more productive ones. some prominent managerial theorists believe that if it isn't broke then you haven't looked hard enough or that you need to break things. Why experiment? Why venture into the unknown? The proper management philosophy should be proactive, e.g., "preventive maintenance." Management philosophy should be used to identify where/when problems may occur and prepare/prevent their occurrence. The “If it ain't broke, don't fix it” approach often causes management myopia in which managers focus on short-term earnings and profits at the expense of their longer-term strategic obligations.
17. It's Better to Beg Forgiveness Than to Constantly Ask for Permission—
Individuals who feel it's better to ask for forgiveness than for permission tend to take action to influence their environments. These courageous, proactive individuals identify opportunities and act on them; they show initiative and energy, assert themselves, embrace (reasonable) risks, take action, and persevere until they bring about meaningful change. "Lead, follow, or get out of the way" certainly fits with their action orientation. Those overly cautious and fearful (fear of failure) individuals who tend to ask for permission often do not identify, let alone seize, opportunities to change things because they are reactively waiting for authorization before doing something action. You can't be blamed for a mistake you didn't make, right? But if, as a leader, you actually "do things" rather than merely perpetuate the status quo, there is a high probability, bordering on certainty, that you will make mistakes and probably ask for mercy. Caution isn't all bad. It's just bad when it's excessive, or when the solution to a problem demands aggressive action. However, good preparation and planning prior to action can give positive results and eliminate the need to beg forgiveness.

18. It's Okay to be Anal (detail-oriented, perfectionist) Sometimes—Being detail-oriented, being punctual, orderliness, having no typos, not misusing words are important. The architect Mies van der Rohe said that "God is in the details." If we take seriously van der Rohe's aphorism, then getting things accomplished requires attending to the small and minute aspects of a job. What of the big picture—doesn't it matter more than details? It matters, but not more. As the saying goes, "Trifles make perfection, and perfection is no trifle." Yet where trifles are concerned, we seem to have lost our capacity for outrage. Sloppiness, carelessness, and thoughtlessness go increasingly unchallenged. You see this slacking off in everything from rudeness on the street to a laid-back "Hey-what's-the-big-deal-it-still-works-doesn't-it?" attitude regarding product defects. Somehow we have gotten the idea that it's bad form to criticize (even when the criticism is constructive); that it's not smart to make waves; and that it's somehow tacky to demand perfection, because, "don't cha know, demanding it just might inconvenience someone. Even more unthinkable, it might dent their self-esteem!" Likewise, there's no need to master the details of grammar, syntax, or spelling, since errors will be caught and fixed by spell checks, grammar checks, and other such programs.

19. “Always be positive—The worst advice you could ever give or receive.”
Quote from Daniels, A. C. (2001). Other People’s Habits..., p. 44.

20. “If you give people something for nothing, you make them good for nothing.”
Quote from Daniels, A. C. (2001). Other People’s Habits..., p. 77.
21. Treating People the Same: An Ineffective Supervisory Strategy—Managing diversity involves organizations making changes in their systems, structures, and management practices in order to eliminate barriers that may keep employees from reaching their full potential. The goal is not to treat all employees the same but to treat them as individuals recognizing that each has different needs and will need different things to succeed. This approach implies that different people in the workplace should be treated equally but differently. Also, famous business author Stephen Covey in his book, The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People, seemed to support this view when he quoted what one successful parent said about raising children, “Treat them all the same by treating them differently” (p. 192).

22. Workplace Chaplains—Marketplace Ministries has grown into an $8.4 million nonprofit corporation, serving employees at 250 companies in 35 states. More than 1,600 chaplains work in 900 locations, offering broad-based pastoral care to about 337,000 employees and family members. And in two decades, no one has sued Marketplace Ministries or its employees. Relate this to Employee Assistance programs.

23. Credit Scores in Business: The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly. More and more organizations today are using credit scores for a variety of reasons. A friend of Dr. Von’s has indicated that All State Insurance Company uses credit scores to help determine what it will charge its potential customers and individuals who do not provide authorization for the organization to obtain an individual's credit score will not be insured. Another consideration involves organizations using credit scores to hire employees. How does such a practice affect various minority groups who have, as a group, lower credit scores. Is this unlawful discrimination?

24. The Limits of Organizations’ Control of Off Duty Conduct—Organizations have started controlling employee’s off-the-job activities to a greater extent than ever. Is it right for a firm to tell employee that they cannot ride motorcycles, scuba dive, or sky dive? Should a company be able to tell an employee that they cannot date someone just because s/he works for a competitor? What does the law and various court cases have to say about this intrusion into an employee’s private life?

25. Put on A Happy Face—You’ve probably seen job advertisements indicating that an organization is now hiring “smiling faces” (think of fast food establishments and other service-oriented businesses). More formally this relates to the topic of organizational display rules. What are the costs and benefits of organizations trying to regulate the emotions of their employees? Some research suggests that forcing display rules on employees takes a heavy emotional toll on these workers and may
leave the organization liable for stress- and job-related disorders as well as leading to job burnout, declines in job performance, and lower job satisfaction.

26. Love Contracts—Some companies are trying to regulate workplace romance and are pressuring employees to sign “volitional dating agreements” to indemnify employers from future harassment charges. Such love contracts are a matter of much philosophical, economic and legal debate as organizations use this legal device to limit their liability to sexual harassment charges.

27. Personal SWOT Analyses—A SWOT (an acronym for Strength, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) framework is commonly used by organizations as part of their strategic planning and has been a foundational tool in this effort since its development in the 1950s and 1960s. It is still widely used today and assists organizations with decision-making, strategizing, and goal setting in a variety of areas as firms evaluate their internal strengths and weaknesses vis-à-vis the external environmental threats and opportunities they face. Because of the success of SWOT analyses in business, this article asks employment counselors to encourage clients to undertake an individual SWOT analysis in which they list their good qualities or strengths after evaluating their physique, hobbies, skills, education, things which they enjoy, etc. Clients are asked to do the same for their weaknesses and dislikes. They are invited to also examine career opportunities and then consider anything which might threaten such opportunities and list these separately. Factors to consider in using this popular organizational analytical tool with individuals should be presented.

28. Offshoring: The Good, Bad and the Ugly—Offshoring has been a highly touted option exercised by organizations to save money and is a type of outsourcing that simply means having certain business functions and/or projects done in another country. India has emerged as the dominant player in offshoring, particularly in software work. Frequently, work is offshored in order to reduce labor expenses however, organizations must realize that there are frequently hidden costs that may substantially impact the anticipated cost savings of offshoring, including project management costs, increased travel expenses, costs of rework, redesign, recoding, communication costs due to misunderstandings, and quality assurance and retest costs. To limit these sometimes problematic situations organizations have implemented nearshoring which involves taking the outsourced work to a nearby country (such as Canada, in the case of the United States). Nearshoring is a popular model for companies that do not want to deal with the cultural, language, or time zone differences involved in offshoring. Although globalization is occurring at high rates, U.S. organizations must thoroughly evaluate not only the obvious labor savings but also hidden costs not so apparent in such initiatives.
29. **Supervising Hispanic Employees**—Hispanics are the fastest growing minority in the U.S. While managing third, fourth and older generations of Hispanics generally presents few problems for employers because such workers are familiar with the U.S. work culture, new immigrant workers of Hispanic descent may be unfamiliar with American work culture and so to ensure maximum employee performance firms may wish to familiarize themselves with work practices in Hispanic (primarily Mexican) cultures in order to better manage these workers in the U.S.

30. **Optimism, Overconfidence, and Arrogance in Technological Disasters**—U.S. culture emphasizes optimism and confidence that positive outcomes are just around the corner. Such an attitude, it is often said, positively influences the risk taking that characterizes entrepreneurial America. At high levels, however, such confidence results in overconfidence, arrogance, and hubris which often leads to problematic situations. This is particularly true with respect to technological arrogance that often lulls people into complacency and ill-fated shortcuts because people don't spend enough time thinking about what could go wrong. As examples of such arrogance, researchers point to the Challenger disaster at NASA, the 2005 BP Texas City refinery explosion, and the 2010 BP catastrophe in the Gulf of Mexico. Refer to the article “BP Disaster, Other Crises Expose Limits” on Dr. Von’s web page in Course Resources for this course.

31. **Clicking at Work**—In its simplest terms, clicking can be defined as an immediate, deep, and meaningful connection with another person or with the world around us. This could be important in such situations as an employment interview or meeting a potential customer where one’s ability to quickly “click” with another is particularly important. Indeed, employees who click are more likely to get promoted and be closer to the social nucleus of a company. See the book *Click: The Magic of Instant Connections* and the article in Resources on Dr. Von’s web page under Behavioral Management entitled “To the Vulnerable Go the Spoils.”

32. **Workplace Gossip and its Consequences**—See the article “Passing the Word: Toward a Model of Gossip and Power in the Workplace” on Dr. Von’s web page under Behavioral Management.

33. **Doing Nothing is Doing Something**—Most supervisors and managers think that in order to motivate workers that they must do something such as reward or punish them. Seldom do supervisors recognize that when employees perform and they do nothing that this also impacts worker behavior. For example, when workers do a satisfactory job and supervisors do nothing then in actuality they are doing something because they are *extinguishing* that behavior and it could be expected that employee performance will decrease in the future. Consider the following
example: failing to praise a helpful act by an employee reduces the odds of that employee helping in the future. Also, consider the aphorism “Ignore her/him and s/he will stop it.” When a person does something irritating, s/he will generally stop it if ignored although initially they may repeat the action more often, or in a noisier fashion, in an effort to gain attention. Hence, this paper addresses the topic of extinction at work and how doing nothing does something—it reduces positive and negative work behavior. It may also increase negative behavior under certain circumstances. This topic refers in general to the topic of operant conditioning and organizational behavior modification.

34. The Positive Effects of Mimicry—Similarities, even small ones, can be effective in producing a positive response to another. For example, when asked to rank-order a waiting list of patients suffering from kidney disorder as to their deservingness for the next available treatment, people chose those whose political party preference matched their own (Furnham, 1996 [Factors relating to the allocation of medical resources] on Dr. Von’s web page under Behavioral Management). Many sales training programs urge trainees to “mirror and match” the customer’s body posture, mood, and verbal style, as similarities along each of these dimensions have been shown to lead to positive results. What other areas does mimicking provide advantages? Of particular interest to the instructor is how mimicry can help attorneys.

35. Getting a Job by Focusing on Nonverbal Communication—It has been estimated that people communicate at least as much nonverbally (i.e., without words) as they do verbally (Hickson, Stacks, & Moore, 2003), with some researchers indicating that even in close face-to-face meetings most information is communicated nonverbally (Harris, 1993; Mehrabian, 1981). Because of the prevalence of nonverbal communication and its impact on organizational behavior it is important that job candidates become consciously aware of this powerful mechanism if they want to increase their chances of a successful job interview, particularly in these difficult economic times. Employment counselors, however, have generally focused on assisting clients with verbal responses to interviewer questions (reference?; e.g., Why did you leave your last two jobs?) and have furnished lesser guidance with respect to harnessing the power of nonverbal communication—which includes body movements and gestures, facial expressions, touch, eye contact, and the physical distance between the sender and the receiver. While research has demonstrated the importance of nonverbal behaviors in the interview situation (Edinger & Patterson, 1983), none have addressed specific nonverbal behaviors that can advantage job candidates in the selection interview. Based on these considerations, this paper provides a review of key nonverbal activities important to job applicants (the SOFTEN approach? Your textbook, p. 160) in securing a job while reviewing the efficacy of
emotional labor and emotional contagion as key macro elements in the job interview process.

References


