

A blue-tinted photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge, showing the suspension towers and cables extending over the water. The image is used as a background for the text.

# A Primer on Management

Notes on improving the practice of  
management theory

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# Credits:

- ◆ The ideas found herein come from colleagues, mentors, students and clients
- ◆ Those with other ideas are welcome to visit “gravel ends” spiritually or physically at “the Iowa site.”
- ◆ Its a place, pictured here, for unincorporated ideas.

# *Management: From where does it come, to where will it go?*

## SOME PRESUPPOSITIONS:

- ◆ Management, as a verb, is relatively new. Beginning in 17<sup>th</sup> Century France, animal trainers “managed” horses with carrots and sticks.
- ◆ 21<sup>st</sup> Century HR managers, now acting as nouns, continue using carrots and sticks, via fixed models.
- ◆ Managing via fixed models discourages “fluid management” of business innovation.
- ◆ The sinking of the Swedish Ship “Vasa” in 1633 illustrated an urgent need to upgrade management hierarchies and the misplaced role of leadership.
- ◆ Further clarification is needed in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to compensate for unwarranted faith in technology and warranted mistrust of sociology.

# *Management: Why the Attraction?*

- ◆ Humans like to control things, e.g., machines, nature, other humans...
- ◆ Humans use hierarchies of thought as control systems, e.g.,: higher, better, bigger, richer, larger, smarter, meaner, nicer, Maslow needs, etc.
- ◆ Where hierarchies of control fail, and they do, we expand or flatten them, but don't abandon them.
- ◆ Where management fails, and it does, we need to look broader and dig deeper.
- ◆ Beyond control, beyond management and outside hierarchy lies negotiation.

The background of the slide is a photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, taken at night. The bridge's towers and suspension cables are illuminated, and the water below is dark with some reflections. The overall tone is blue and moody.

# *An HR Management history: The emphasis on preferred body-parts*

## 200 Years of Management Theory

1776 – 1976

- Theory X: “Hands”  
A.Smith/C.Babbage/F.L.Taylor
- Theory Y: “Heads”  
McGregor/Ackoff
- Theory Z: “Hearts”  
Ouchi
- Humans?  
Trist

# Limits on management

HOLY BIBLE

**WARNING:** This is a work of fiction. **Do NOT take it literally.**

**CONTENT ADVISORY:** Contains verses descriptive or advocating suicide, incest, bestiality, sadomasochism, sexual activity in a violent context, murder, morbid violence, use of drugs or alcohol, homosexuality, voyeurism, revenge, undermining of authority figures, lawlessness, and human rights violations and atrocities.

**EXPOSURE WARNING:** Exposure to contents for extended periods of time or during formative years in children may cause delusions, hallucinations, decreased cognitive and objective reasoning abilities, and, in extreme cases, pathological disorders, hatred, bigotry, and violence including, but not limited to fanaticism, murder, and genocide.

From here, leadership is a given, and management is a liability.

Which perspective on management: Old or New Testament?

When you include other sacred texts, management gets “complicated.”

# *An English Culpability in Limits of Current Management Practice*

- ◆ Western management models were inspired by the Victorian Age. (“Queen Victoria’s Baggage: The Legacy of Building Dysfunctional Organizations,” Daniel Silverman, University Press, 1999.)
- ◆ Thus, the limits depicted in Plato’s “Allegory of the Cave” remain in place.
- ◆ Adam Smith was only the beginning of the problems in modern management. (One is an English Foxhound, the other is from the US South. No metaphorical significance.)

# *The Management Dilemma*

- ◆ Social Institutions restrict change
- ◆ Management opposes change
- ◆ Change is of nature and will “have its way.”
- ◆ Changelessness thereby is societal overhead and becomes high maintenance
- ◆ Management acts out to restrict natural adaptation to change.
- ◆ Change Management is an oxymoron





# *1990s – Management via MIS: Data Management Outweighs Wisdom*

- ◆ A pound of data is worth an ounce of “information”
- ◆ A pound of information is worth an ounce of “knowledge”
- ◆ A pound of knowledge is worth an ounce of “understanding”
- ◆ A pound of understanding is worth an ounce of appreciating “wisdom”



*Data Management doing wrong  
things more efficiently*

“Intelligence is the ability to increase efficiency while wisdom is the ability to increase effectiveness.” (In response to a question about the limits of MIS, by the head of SAP.)

Russell Ackoff, on his 80<sup>th</sup> birthday, 1999.



*MIS is a diversion from the larger potential of systems*

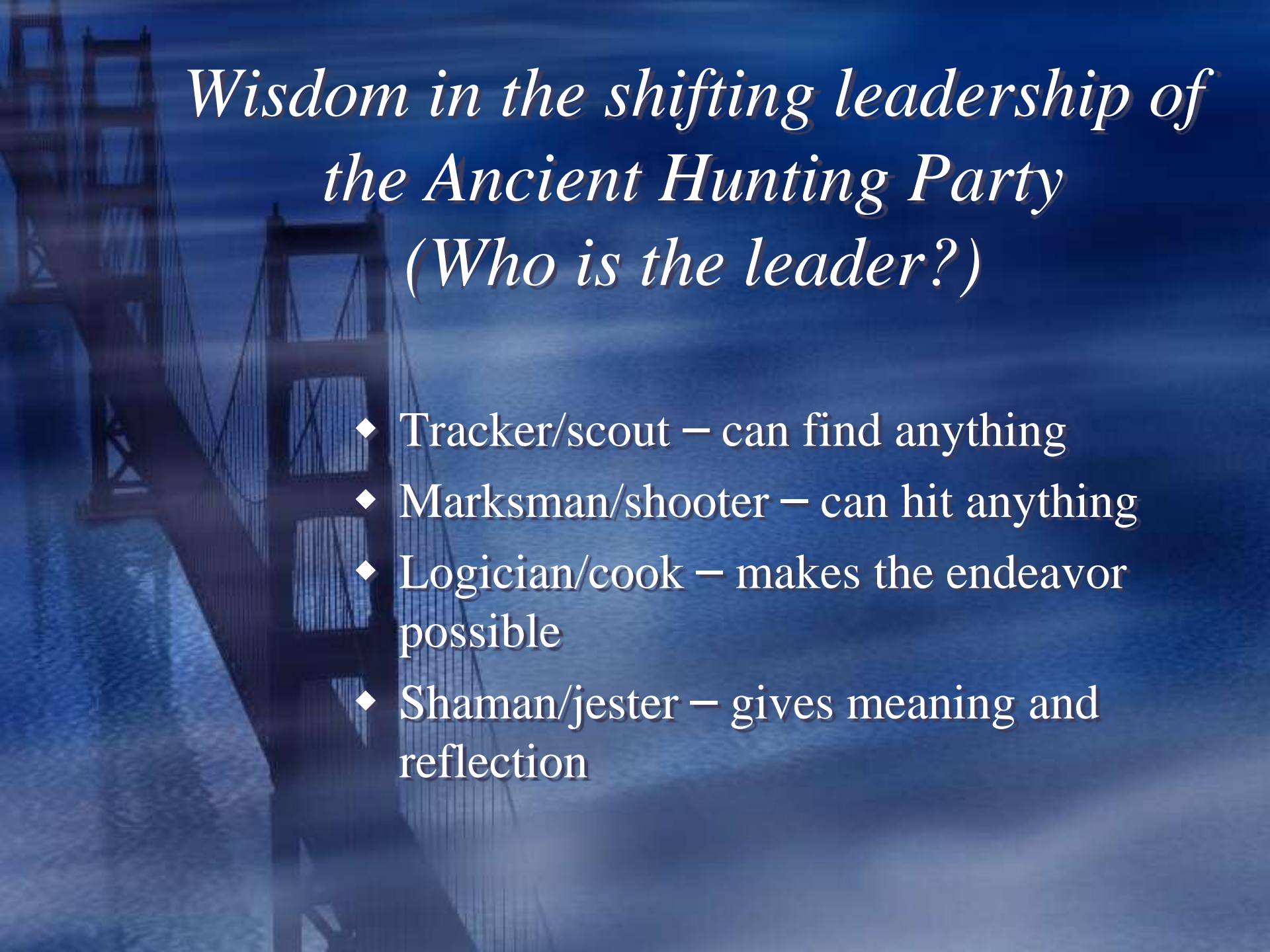
*A system:*

- ◆ Is not an arithmetic function, where “the parts are more than the sum of the whole.”
- ◆ It exhibits behavior not explainable by behavior of the parts. And,
- ◆ It allow access to an endeavor’s spirit, therefore it serves as an organizing and mobilizing phenomenon.

# Modern Management: the parts are there, but over time they disorganize

- ◆ Its Newtonian metaphors are unhelpful
- ◆ Its Firm and static control is inconsistent with current events.
- ◆ Its hierarchies are too slow and consume motivation.
- ◆ Success is against it





*Wisdom in the shifting leadership of  
the Ancient Hunting Party  
(Who is the leader?)*

- ◆ Tracker/scout – can find anything
- ◆ Marksman/shooter – can hit anything
- ◆ Logician/cook – makes the endeavor possible
- ◆ Shaman/jester – gives meaning and reflection

# *Abandoning the data Mining myth: Higher dimensional thinking*

<u>Dimension</u>	<u>Resource</u>	<u>Learning potential</u>
3+n	Wisdom?	$3^n$
3	Knowledge	$2^2$
2	Information	1
1	Data	0

A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, taken from a low angle looking up at the tower. The bridge is silhouetted against a deep blue, hazy sky. The water below is dark and reflects the bridge's structure. The overall mood is serene and contemplative.

# *Seeing better truths in higher levels of abstraction*

0 - Manifestation.....*the thing in itself.*

1 - Measures.....of things.

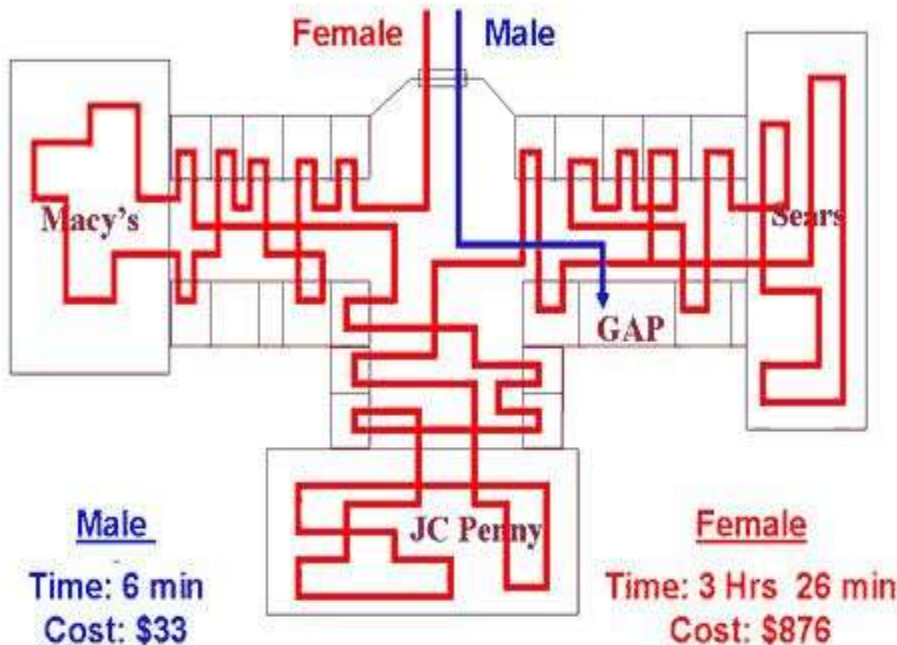
2 - Models.....about measures

3 - Metaphors.....for myths

4 - Myths.....meaning

# *Negotiating with what can't be managed*

## **Mission: Go to Gap, Buy a Pair of Pants**



- ◆ How do we identify and deal with culture?
- ◆ Some differences are fundamental.
- ◆ From bargaining certainty to negotiating ambiguity.



# *Negotiation: what, why, how?*

- ◆ Negotiation involves differences that make a difference; i.e., bypasses questions of hierarchy or centrally imposed forms
- ◆ Arrogance is the enemy of negotiation, e.g., "What's mine is mine, what's yours' is negotiable. Now lets negotiate."
- ◆ The ugly sister of arrogance, known as ignorance, also deters negotiation. "As long as you know, why learn?"
- ◆ To negotiate change must become your ally.



# *Change vs. Changelessness*

- ◆ Change is a difference that makes a difference
- ◆ Change is unpredictable.
- ◆ Change can be disloyal.
- ◆ Culture is used to resist change.
- ◆ Change sees history as evolving.
- ◆ Changelessness requires difficult reinterpretations.



*Change/Changelessness is  
more fundamental than  
differences between:*

- ◆ Black/White
- ◆ Female/Male
- ◆ Theory/Practice
- ◆ Socialistic/Capitalistic
- ◆ Secure/Risky
- ◆ Public/Private



## *Change in the West during the 500 BC era*

- ◆ Parmenides of Elea – argued reality was “changelessness”
- ◆ Heraclitus of Ephesus – argued reality was “change”

(Who won? Who is losing?)



# *Change In the East during the 500 BC era*

- ◆ Confucius or Master K'ung – argued for rationalized stability, slow change.
- ◆ Laotse, the Old Man, or the Mystic – argued for change as central to meaning to life, and death.



# *Change & Changelessness?*

- ◆ Which attitude was central to societal and institution design, building and management during the past 2,500 years?



# *Problems in problem formation and resolution:*

- ◆ I: Non-problems – self initiated, mostly silly.
- ◆ II: Problems – determine your best course of action, then take it.
- ◆ III: Contradictions – select from amongst two, or more, ways forward. The best is and remains indeterminate.
- ◆ IV: Dilemmas – choice disallowed, action required, keep two or more opposites going.



*Rethinking our dichotomies, i.e.,  
Integrating them*

- ◆ Specialist – one who learns more and more about less and less until one eventually they knows everything about nothing
- ◆ Generalist – one who learns less and less about more and more until they eventually know nothing about everything
- ◆ We can do better.





## *Same division, same response*

- ◆ Artistic – a viewpoint that there are special differences in things that all seem common
- ◆ Scientific – a viewpoint that there are some commonalities in things that all seem special and different



# *Solution: Seeking the proverbial 3<sup>rd</sup> Paradigm*

- ◆ 1<sup>st</sup> PARADIGM – Mechanical  
Thinking: thinking about machines,  
until you end up thinking as a  
machine.
- ◆ 2<sup>nd</sup> PARADIGM – Systemic  
Thinking: thinking about  
connections between things, until  
you stop thinking of things.
- ◆ 3<sup>rd</sup> PARADIGM – Both plus more  
is better.



## *Negotiating with the 3<sup>rd</sup> Paradigm*

- ◆ Control – Nice, but you won't have it.
- ◆ Managing – Acceptable but it won't hold water.
- ◆ Negotiating – The way, but its fluid nature will be difficult for managers.

# *A Problem in Logic*

- ◆ Logic is a noun that represents the art of thinking and reasoning in strict accordance with the limitations and incapacities of human misunderstanding. The basis of logic is the syllogism, consisting of a major and minor premise and a conclusion, thus:
- ◆ A: Major premise – 60 men can do a piece of work 60 times as quickly as 1 man.
- ◆ B: Minor premise – 1 man can dig a posthole in 60 seconds, therefore
- ◆ C: Conclusion – 60 men can dig a posthole in 1 second.

By combining logic and mathematics we obtain a double certainty and are twice blessed (Ambrose Bierce, Devil's Dictionary, 1888).

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**DANGER**



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PERSONNEL ONLY**

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OBTAINED PRIOR TO ENTERING SITE**

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HUGE FUCK-UP  
CALL TODD  
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**CAUTION BOBCAT & HEAVY MACHINERY OPERATING**

**DEEP EXCAVATION  
DEMOLITION IN PROGRESS  
WORKERS OVERHEAD  
EXPLOSIVE POWERED TOOL IN USE**



**FORKLIFT  
IN USE**



**HAILING TOOL  
IN USE  
KEEP CLEAR**



**WELDING IN  
PROGRESS**



**BEWARE OF  
CRANE**

**GET SERIOUS ABOUT WORKPLACE HEALTH & SAFETY**



**SAFETY  
FOOTWEAR**



**SAFETY  
HELMETS**



**EAR & EYE  
PROTECTION**



**SAFETY HARNESS  
MUST BE WORN**



**FALL ARREST EQUIPMENT  
MUST BE USED**

ALL SUBCONTRACTORS  
ARE TO PROVIDE  
ELECTRICAL TOOLS  
AND EQUIPMENT TO  
SITE FOREMAN BEFORE  
COMMENCEMENT

**NO ALCOHOL  
PERMITTED  
ON THIS SITE**

**MUST BE WORN ON THIS SITE WHERE REQUIRED**

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More to follow on other approaches to simplifying management practice...