Editorial

Human Systems Management at 20

Human Systems Management (HSM), an international journal, has entered its 20th volume. Such an important anniversary calls for a short reflection, recapitulation and outlook.

The first issue of HSM came out in February 1980. The journal was a brainchild of Milan Zeleny and the two co-founding editors, Manfred Kochen and Erik Johnsen. Both its title and message were quite ahead of its time: very few people knew or cared what ‘human systems’ were and the need for their management was not widely perceived. The journal survived the challenge. HSM covers and their texts were personally designed: they did not have to be changed, amended or adapted since. North-Holland Publishing Company was the first Publisher and Dr. Einar Fredriksson was its Publishing editor.


The ‘Circle of Human Systems Management’ listed its members also in the first HSM issue. Among the hundreds members of the Circle we find names like Ackoff, Ansoff, Barankin, Bass, Bennis, Carlsson, Gaines, Hertz, Kuhn, Lewin, Pask, Prigogine, Roy, Shakun, Starr, Trapp, Turoff, Varela, Von Foerster, Weick, Zadeh, Zimmermann, Zions, etc.

Among better known or more famous authors publishing in HSM we find Karl W. Deutsch, Edgar Morin, L.A. Zadeh, Marvin Minsky, Myron Tribus, Magoroh Maruyama, Geert Hofstede, Sir Karl Popper, Peter Checkland, Allan H. Meltzer, Jaroslav Vanek, and C. West Churchman.

In 1980 Leonard Uhr proposed knowledge sharing through Computer network-based responsive self-organizing groups. Gorelik wrote on Bogdanov’s Tek-
The above scheme is still incomplete but it does provide a framework for HSM. None of the concerns can be isolated or applied in isolation. One should not view these themes in a context-free fashion just because it is easy or convenient. Management can only be understood and become successful in terms of its relations to human systems and all of its concerns. Management clearly is not about issuing commands, giving orders, imposing ranks, hierarchies, or any other church/military artifacts. Such commands could often be necessary and effective measures for achieving goals, but they are not management. They surely do not amount to either human management of systems or management of human systems. One does not manage through issuing orders—one just issues orders. Commander is not a manager.

Many executives are very good commanders and they do achieve results: gain market share, fool the enemy, bring loot to the troops, win or/and annihilate. They do not manage: they do not enhance human knowledge, experience and aspirations. They are business administrators, not managers. They are not subject of HSM study or interest; commanders are not a concern of human systems management. Their employees are objects to be fired at will, their customers objects to be manipulated with cunning, and their technologies and systems are weapons to be acquired, hired and deployed.

The journal of *Human Systems Management* is now positioned to enter the new millennium with greater drives towards focused creativity, innovation and knowledge enhancement. Concerns with e-commerce, m-commerce and e-management are going to provide both human and technological embedding. ‘Knowledgement’ has become an integrated and important subset of human systems management. Wisdom systems will see their first and much expected development, and self-organization and self-management will continue to stimulate both research and practice of business management.

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