

## Editorial

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# On management-paradigm transition

The journal of *Human Systems Management* is now entering, after some 8 years of its association with North-Holland publishers, a significant period of transition. This is therefore my last Editorial under the old auspices: a footnote, or a tiny carving in the bark of a mighty tree of knowledge. It's the kind of thing you read with amusement if you ever come back, to visit...

Many people have worked very hard for more than a decade (*HSM Circle* has existed since 1975), others did not work so hard, and some simply complained. To all we are thankful for their efforts, concerns or the grace of affiliation. Among those who worked *very* hard, there might be a sense of somewhat misplaced relief: we did it, we did it right, and *they* did not take it. This would be incorrect: we did fail to reach 'them' and rethinking of HSM purpose is necessary during the transition.

We did fail to turn profits for the Publisher and are thus obliged to search for a more streamlined and more compatible operation.

Failure is a dreadful word in English language. Americans even chose inventing new words to circumvent the straightforward, useful and clean meaning of failure. Failure should be a continuous state of mind because the opposite would imply that all our goals have been achieved. How lowly and how unimaginative our goals must have been! That nobody is allowed to 'fail' in the U.S.A. is a tragedy of human spirit. In reality, people do fail in reaching their goals, there is nothing wrong with it and it gives people a rare opportunity for new redirection and renewal. Let me quote from Eugene O'Neill, an American:

'The noblest is eternally the most tragic. The people who succeed and do not push on to a greater failure are the spiritual middle classers. Their stopping at success is the proof of their

compromising insignificance. How pretty their dreams must have been! The man who pursues the mere attainable should be sentenced to get it – and keep it. Let him rest on this laurels and enthrone him in a Morris chair, in which laurels and hero may wither away together. Only through the unattainable does man achieve a hope worth living and dying for – and so attain himself. He with the spiritual guerdon of a hope in hopelessness, is nearest to the stars and the rainbow's foot.

This is how the best of Americans used to think not so long ago. Even recently deceased Clare Booth Luce, the celebrated founder of *Life* magazine, said: 'I don't really understand the word "success". I know people who use it about me, but I don't understand it.' We don't either.

*HSM* has started to formulate a new system of management – well before its time. It tried to draw attention to human resources and knowledge as major forms of business and social capital – also well before its time. *HSM* tried to reintegrate knowledge and resist the deadly specialization and atomization of tasks and functions – before its time.

This is not to say that *HSM* efforts were before their *actual* or real time (all three mentioned phenomena now dominate the world of practice and action), but well before this change became *perceived* and understood by human observers and interpreters. Still, that's what 'before its time' ultimately must mean and means in a society and no apology is intended.

In the meantime, specialized, overspecialized and plain narrow journals have more than flourished. Data and information still sell, knowledge and wisdom do not. Publishers still cater to multitudes of those who strive to learn more and more about less and less, ultimately knowing 'everything' about 'nothing'. Vulgar specialization is often veiled in cute 'publishspeak' of 'focus', 'target' or 'niche', but in the end, knowledge and wisdom have precious little to do with the specialization and 'expert' expertise. By their very definition, knowledge and wisdom cross the boundaries.

*HSM* too has crossed the boundaries. Not many have decided to follow. Every year we waited and compromised. Waiting for Godot is a surrealistic waste of time. No matter how good is an idea, if it's 'before its time', if it can't be shared by a community, if it's not common, conventional or self-evident, it better be retained by the élite and not diffused and wasted.

Ideas are *shared* manifestations of culture. They must first emerge in the head of one or few persons, no doubt about it; but their appearance does not guarantee their subsequent acceptance or tenure, regardless their intrinsic quality or future worth.

We have studied such topics as high technology, co-management, participatory organizations, integrated process management, self-service trends, automation, robotization, artificial intelligence, approximate reasoning, cybernetics and Bat'a-system, combined it all with some useful history of science and politics, added human and personal touch. We wanted to reach or help to create the broadly educated *renaissance manager* of the twenty-first century: somebody with vision, competence, sense of history, culture integration and feel for human endeavor. There is so much talking about HIM. We report that he does not exist yet.

Still, I personally remain convinced that at least an educated manager will emerge before this century is over – even in the U.S.A.

Some of us will use our *HSM*-advantage and continue expanding the *HSM* ideas. Others will help to re-invent *HSM*, as it certainly will have to be re-invented in the near future. But then, should not we as well do it ourselves?

We could have chosen an easy success-assuring path. We could have concentrated on some algorithms, theorems and lemmas, fancy pseudo-scientific formalism, unintelligent software packages and specialized technicalities. That is what still 'sells' in 1988, we assure you. The number of received 'manuscripts' was very large. Every year we were pressured to degrade *HSM* into some overspecialized, 'well-defined', and precisely 'targeted' pseudoscience. Our Editors would not have succumbed to that: we wanted to deal with *human systems*, in all their richness, ambiguity and complexity. Reducing them to simplistic formulas of fuzzy algebra would have amounted to a white-collar crime.

The 'successes' of anti-*HSM* trends (specializa-

tion, reductionism, formalism and mechanism) have nothing to do with the 'usefulness' or 'quality' of *human systems management*. It is definitional that at the times of grand transformations it is the majority which is bound to cling to the old and outdated views. Only a tiny minority can first venture into the new and more progressive world of ideas. It has something to do with what is there to lose and for whom.

There is no other way and we are not envious of the predictable successes of others. Their persistence, their mass appeal and their accessibility cannot be our criteria: they provide us with no assurances of lasting insight, truth or quality.

We failed because we did try to move beyond an algorithm. We tried to limit the appeal of mind-crippling 'models' à la  $S = (P, G)$ , i.e., society is a function of people and government (Not to mention trying to take second derivatives of such 'things'.) We failed to dampen the enthusiasm of those who enjoy doing precisely that: learning more and more about less and less, along the downward-sloping regression line.

We planted some seeds and the plant wilted early. The question is: did it put down some good roots? Is it actually a perennial? If it is, then it is bound to come back the next spring: strong, vigorous and in full display of all its branches of possibilities. In these bleak and gray days of winter there seems to be no way of knowing.

Let us recall the very first issue of *HSM*: Robert K. Mueller, Chairman of the Board of Arthur D. Little, Inc., presented his leadership and governance study *Leading-Edge-Leadership*; Joshua Lederberg, President of Rockefeller University and Nobel Prize Winner, dealt with *Digital Communications*; C. Theodore Larson, Professor emeritus of Architecture at the University of Michigan, wrote an essay on *Changing Urban Patterns*; John F. Magee, President and CEO of Arthur D. Little, Inc., wrote about *Management as an Evolving Technology*, V.H. Brix, retired British Civil Servant, wrote on *Social Cybernetics*; Eugen Loebel, now deceased First Deputy Minister of Foreign Trade of Czechoslovakia, wrote his famous essay on *Humanomics*; and C.V. Negoită first presented his concept of *Pullback*.

At the time we could not realize that such 'line-up' would be a sure prescription for failure.

In my 'Editorial statement' in the *HSM* premier issue I wrote: 'Such ambitious goals, or ideals,

are not to be accomplished overnight. We might even fail in achieving them. Yet, no lesser set of goals would do. The actual outcome is not as important as the process undertaken on its behalf.'

The process continues. It can never be stopped by quarterly profit reports or the peddlers of 'knowing everything about nothing'.

We are now to stop talking about management methods, approaches, techniques, practices and other inadequate knowledge 'splinters'. We start talking about management *systems*. *Management systems* are the technologies which now matter in globally competitive environments: human management of systems and management of human

systems – human systems management.

We shall study, evolve and implement, the new management paradigm, loosely affiliated with the names of Deming, Juran and Ishikawa, referred to as Japanese-style, Bat'a-system or Total Quality Management. We invite all practitioners and researchers of management to join us in the transition of management paradigm: it may happen only once in your lifetime.

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