

THE CONTROL OF ALCOHOLISM AS A MEASURE OF EFFICIENCY IN MANAGEMENT

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'Every effort has been made since the end of the Second World War to obtain sufficient suitable recruits for the running staff (of the Tramways Department), not only to complete the establishment necessary for the operations of scheduled services, but to offset the continual wastage of personnel . . . It is imperative that the maximum services be obtained from every available man. One factor militating against optimum labour potential from a large body of workers is the loss of efficiency brought about by alcoholism. This problem is one faced not only by the Tramways Department, but by large employers of labour throughout the world and various methods have been and are being tried in an effort to combat the growth of what has come to be recognized as a disease¹ threatening the social structure of the community. We, the City Council of Johannesburg, agree to assist in the Alcoholic Rehabilitation Scheme conducted by Dr. Boris Serebro.'²

This extract is an example of progressive industrial thinking by a local authority, which motivated the decision taken by the City Council of Johannesburg at its 824th Ordinary Meeting in December 1954.³

The management directive indicated above was put into operation by the Unit of the Alcoholic Rehabilitation Scheme which I conducted, and the facilities of this Unit were extended to all employees from all departments of the City Council of Johannesburg. At the same time, all heads of departments of the City Council who are concerned with management were made aware of these facilities for the treatment and the rehabilitation of their alcohol-addicted employees. Likewise trade unions and the Staff Association, representing the labour aspect, were informed of the facilities available for their members who are employed by the various municipal departments.*

Human Relations in Management

The conscious acceptance of positive attitudes in the field of human relations, particularly with regard to good labour-management relations, is a necessary prerequisite in the approach to the problem of alcoholism.⁵ The management that accepts this premise must obviously realize the managerial implications of the principle, particularly in respect of its personnel planning and policy. Furthermore, the acceptance of this principle indicated clearly that in the municipal administration management was in accord with the City Council and its efforts to prevent the continual man-power wastage and to facilitate the recruitment of personnel.⁶ At the same time an example was set to the community as a whole.

From the point of view of human relations in management the municipal departments may be characterized in

* The financial assistance which the City Council gave to the Unit was terminated in April 1957.⁴

3 groups according as (1) both management and labour, (2) either management or labour, or (3) neither management nor labour, are interested in the human relations aspect of their personnel.

Effect of Good Human Relations on the Alcohol-addiction Rate in Departmental Personnel

(a) Where management and labour were both seriously concerned with human relations as affecting departmental personnel, we found that there was good cooperation between these two interests in dealing with alcoholism. Both made it their business to ensure that alcohol-addicted workers were 'spotted', interviewed and encouraged to undergo treatment and rehabilitation by my Unit. Treatment in the majority of cases was obligatory and was made a condition of continuing employment.⁷ Dismissal was used as a final resort and was applied only when this condition was not fulfilled. In fact, it was not the management but the alcoholic worker that 'fired' himself. This encouragement and the directing of the alcohol-addict worker to the Unit revealed the extent of alcohol addiction in the department. Labour cooperation facilitated both treatment and rehabilitation. In one instance labour cooperated by supplying the Unit with social-relations officers drawn from the ranks of the workers themselves.⁸ These men called at the homes of alcohol-addicted workers and treatment was much helped by the effective contact established by the social-relations officers, who 'spoke the same language' as the worker and appreciated the peculiarities and difficulties of the job and its specialized environment.

(b) A management in a department, without the cooperation of labour, can do much for the alcohol-addicted worker, but is handicapped in 'spotting' the alcoholic, and as a result is unable to discover the extent of alcohol addiction in the department. Similarly, labour in the form of an active trade union, without the cooperation of management, could not make the treatment and rehabilitation of addicted rank-and-file workers obligatory. This compulsion, basically economic, is essential for the ultimate well-being of the individual alcoholic.⁹

(c) In a minority of the City Council's departments a situation was found where neither management nor labour was interested in the human-relation aspect of their employees. For example, in a big department with large numbers of employees no alcohol-addicted workers were directed to the Unit. We knew that the alcohol-addiction rate of City Council European employees as a whole was about 12%,¹⁰

and therefore that the fact that no alcoholics came to the Unit from this large department did not indicate that there were no alcohol-addicted workers in the department, but that neither labour nor management took an interest in the employees' human relations. The management of this department had totally ignored the directive issued by the City Council.

The Alcohol-addiction Rate of a Department as a Measure of Management and General Efficiency

(a) A relatively high alcohol-addiction rate in the workers of a department may be the result of an active human-relation policy on the part of management and/or labour and the directing of suitable cases to the Unit for therapy, and this could usually be equated with good labour-management relations. In such a department communication was adequate on all levels, job morale was high, and absenteeism, including sickness absenteeism, was not excessive, while trading accounts were most profitable. This high general efficiency bore a direct relationship to a high alcohol-addiction rate, which indicated effective control of the alcoholics in the department.

(b) Management or labour acting alone results in a lower alcohol-addiction rate in a department. In such a department we noticed that communication was of the oscillating variety and was dependent on the changing moods and tensions in the management itself. Human relations were often strained. The sickness-absenteeism rate was high and the trading accounts left much to be desired. The dismissal rate of known alcoholics was high, while the labour turn-over gave cause for alarm. The index of efficiency of the department bore a direct relationship to the lower alcohol-addiction rate, which was indicative of inadequate control of alcoholics in the department.

(c) Where neither management nor labour was interested in the human-relations aspect of their workers, few if any were directed to the Unit. This indicated that communication had broken down at all levels in the department and that as a consequence all actions and decisions taken by the management were viewed with suspicion. A minimal or *nil* alcohol-addiction rate showed that there was no control at all of the alcohol-addicted workers, and reflected adversely on the general efficiency of the department.

The reference to a Unit of alcohol-addicted workers from an industrial organization, resulting from adequate attention to the human relations of the workers, acts both as a diagnostic and prognostic tool in the hands of a scientifically orientated methods and organization division, or personnel or staff department, and is an indication of the management efficiency level.

SUMMARY

The City Council of Johannesburg assisted in maintaining a Unit for the purpose of treating and rehabilitating workers addicted to alcohol in its departments. Management and labour in the departments were made aware of the facilities provided for alcohol-addicted workers by an Alcoholic Rehabilitation Scheme in Johannesburg.

The departments differ according to the interest management and labour show in the human relations aspect of the workers. Where human relations are adequate as the result of cooperation between labour and management, the addicted workers are referred to the Unit and the recorded alcohol-addiction rate in the workers is high; without such cooperation it is lower, and in a few departments where neither management nor labour is interested there is a minimal or *nil* alcohol-addiction return.

A high alcohol-addiction rate was found to be indicative of good labour management relations, and was also reflected in high general efficiency. Similarly a low addiction rate was found to be proportionally indicative of lack of interest in human relations and of low general departmental efficiency.

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