The Roots and Future of Management Theory

William F. Roth Ph.D.

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"The Roots and Future of Management Theory" presents a well-researched history of management theory that can be used in classrooms and for seminars. Written by William F. Roth, a professor of management sciences at Kutztown University, a Senior Fellow at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, and author of six other books in his field, "The Roots…" introduces readers in a user-friendly manner to the origins of modern day management practices. It begins with the team-oriented, cooperative approach of the Medieval Period guilds. It then carries us into the Renaissance workplace where the merchant class wrested power away from the Church and nobility, shifting cultural emphasis toward individualism, competition, and profit. The third stop is the Protestant Reformation Period during which the Protestant Work Ethic was generated, spawning both the middle class and modern workplace exploitation. Next we enter the Enlightenment Period, possibly the most innovative era in Western history due to the fact that empirical thinking became the rage and technology took center stage. The ensuing Industrial Revolution was shaped mainly by our growing love affair with technology, our growing infatuation with efficiency, and our attempts to turn workers into machine parts. The book discusses worker resentment of this treatment that led to the unionization movement and to the battle between the Robber Barons, who fostered a "law of the jungle" atmosphere, and Humanists who believed that individual development was important, but not at the expense of others. The book's next stop is the Post-Industrial Revolution and the re-birth of a team approach reminiscent of the early guilds. During this period the battle between efficiency experts locked into the numbers and those who believe that humans are more productive when treated like humans continues. And, finally, "The Roots…" deals with the impact of computers on workplace management systems, with the fact that they are driving us away from the Work Ethic and toward a newly evolving Development Ethic that is forcing us to change our ways of doing things, both as employees and as members of society. During our trip we meet individuals who have made major contributions to management theory including Niccolo Machiavelli, Martin Luther, Adam Smith, Sir Thomas Malthus, David Ricardo, Herbert Spenser, John Stuart Mill, Robert Owen, J. P. Morgan, Andrew Carnegie, Samuel Gompers, Frederick Taylor, Oliver Sheldon, Max Weber, Henry Ford, Mary Follet, Rensis Likert, Douglas McGregor, Elton Mayo, Eric Trist, Abraham Maslow, Donald Schon, Peter Drucker, W. Edwards Deming, and Russell Ackoff. We visit such concepts as "one-just-price," Machiavellian Humanism, Christian Humanism, the "scarcity mentality," the Protestant Work Ethic, "useable truths," the economic man, efficiency versus effectiveness, scientific management, the mechanistic school, the human relations school, the systems school, the Development Ethic, statistical measurement techniques, socio-technical theory, dynamic conservativism, autonomous work groups, labor-management councils, MBO, team building, quality improvement, idealized design, circular organization, reengineering, 6-sigma, and the growth versus development controversy. The story finishes by telling us how our workplace culture needs to change in order to take fullest advantage of the advances made during the last six centuries. It follows our historic progression from the Survival Ethics during the Dark Ages and Medieval period to the Development Ethic during the Post Industrial Revolution. It finishes by suggesting management tools and techniques that will facilitate our final achievement of the Development Ethic as a "stable state" both in the workplace and in society.

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