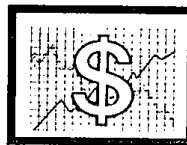


Business

Marilyn Fitchett editor/591-2300

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(F11C)

'Tell me about it, then hit <ENTER>'

Computers analyze management problems

By Gerald Frawley
staff writer

Information changes behavior. That is the guiding premise on which a new computer diagnostic tool — developed by Plymouth Township-based Human Synergistics — is based.

Available in January, the computer program is designed to help managers overcome the stumbling blocks that act as impediments to productivity.

"Every organization in this country is trying to change, and they're starting to recognize they're getting in their own way," said J. Clayton Lafferty, chief executive officer of Human Synergistics.

"How we manage is the single biggest block to productivity," he said.

Most managers think external forces — the economy, market demand, competition — prevent greater success.

"(But) most of the problems people have is the nature of the stuff in their heads," Lafferty said. The most important skill a manager or person can have is his or her behavior, and behaviors flow from thinking patterns.

People may not even be aware they have a problem, Lafferty said. What is needed is a way to identify poor thinking patterns.

That is what the Management Growth Report, based on the Life Styles Inventory (LSI) Stylus does.

Once an individual is conscious of the problem, he can change the poor thinking behind the problem, Human Synergistics president Bill Neale

said. For example, power-seeking may be a problem for a manager.

A case study of a manager with power-seeking problems showed an extremely high grievance rate among subordinates. "The company invested \$15,000 trying to get his grievance rate down," Neale said.

SEMINARS, CHARM schools, discussions — nothing worked, Neale said. The number of grievances continued to climb and employees were demanding the manager be terminated.

"What we found was that he (the manager) had an unhealthy notion of power," Neale said. Rather than viewing power as something that is delegated, he viewed power as something to hold over people.

When the problem was explained,

the manager was able to correct it himself, Neale said.

"The problem was that everyone was trying to reduce the number of grievances, but no one was getting at the root of the problem. Why there were so many grievances."

For example, an individual conscious of his or her own avoidance behavior can then focus on exactly when he or she is avoiding things (in stressful situations, all the time), where (at work, at home, during meetings), and what is being avoided (people, situations).

Before an individual can improve his thinking and behavior, he has to accept the premise that people can change, Lafferty said. "That is the biggest myth — that people can't change."

THE MANAGEMENT Growth Report (MGR) might then suggest steps to get beyond the avoidance problem, including setting goals, trying different things, or accomplishing small tasks as a precursor to more significant steps.

By forcing changes, even in small steps, people can modify their behavior, but not if they don't know behavior needs modifying, Lafferty said.

The MGR measures personal beliefs, values, behavior, assumptions and consequences concerning ourselves. All that is required, he said, is that a person take about a half hour to honestly answer about 250 questions. The computer program then prints out a 56-page manual on the test taker, which gives a person insight into himself, Lafferty said.

"It's literally a custom book about the person," he said.

Lafferty said Human Synergistics encourages followups after six months to gauge changes in behavior and to reinforce the results of the first test. It is also a good idea, he said, to ask four or five people who you know well to fill out a form with you in mind.

If they really know you, he said,

the report generated by them should be similar to the one you filled out.

Lafferty also said retaking the management growth report is beneficial because sometimes people will fall back into old habits — reinforcement ensures that this will not happen, he said.

MOST PEOPLE will be interested in taking the life styles inventory and reading the management growth report because it is about themselves, Lafferty said. And if they were honest taking the inventory, they will generally accept the results.

But some will deny the report is accurate and resist the results, he said. There's very little a report can do to change this, Lafferty said, but in the report's favor is the fact that the person took the report willingly and will hopefully accept it with an open mind.

Because the report is confidential and no one but the test taker sees it, Lafferty added, people may be more willing to take a close look at it and themselves.

Earlier computer diagnostic tools on the market — at best — identify only four basic management styles, Lafferty said. "That's absurd."

The MGR incorporates more than 20 years of research, Lafferty said, and while the number of different reports is finite, there are potentially thousands of possibilities.

Each response to a question — and combinations of questions — in the Life Styles Inventory triggers a different aspect in the report. There are 12 basic life styles, only four of which — affiliative, achievement, humanistic/encouraging, self-actualizing — are psychologically healthy. The others — approval seeking, conventional, dependent, avoidance, oppositional, power seeking, competitive and perfectionistic — are unhealthy.

EACH PERSON'S thinking and behavior are made up of several of

these styles to varying degrees, Lafferty said, but one or two are predominant.

The problem, he said, is when destructive thinking and behavior outweigh a person's positive aspects. Human Synergistics began testing the computer program on air traffic controllers, bank managers and school officials throughout the country in March.

Deborah Mondro, director, sales and marketing for Human Synergistics, said employers frequently send employees to seminars to learn how to be better managers, but many of these seminars are too broad and don't address the specific needs of the individual.

The management growth report generated by the Life Styles program is written about the individual, she said, and will be more helpful.

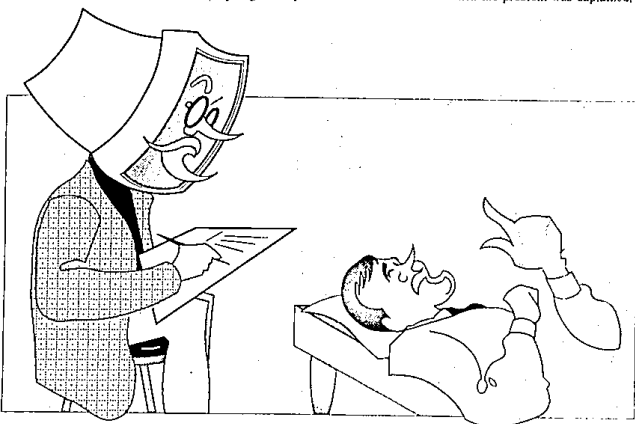
Seminars are also far more expensive than the computer program, which will sell for roughly \$125, she said. Discounts will be available for bulk purchases.

"Companies don't have the money or the time (for seminars) today," Mondro said. When companies send employees to seminars, costs — including travel, boarding and seminar costs — can run into the thousands of dollars.

MONDRO ALSO said that while companies spend a substantial amount in training dollars, those training dollars are the first to fall in budget cuts. An easy-to-use, relatively inexpensive computer program could cut training costs by two-thirds and offer the same and probably more benefit, she said.

Mondro said Human Synergistics is launching its program at the Best Of American Training Conference in New York in January.

"A significant change in a key individual can make an incredible difference in the organization," he said.



Some workers question commitments to quality

By David F. Stein
special writer

Wounded American industry, anxious to win back customers and confront competitors globally, has aimed at the elusive target called quality and claimed some successes in recent years. But many workers feel left out of the quest.

A credibility gap exists between company talk and company action, according to a Gallup survey this year of more than 1,000 American employees that was funded by the American Society for Quality Control (ASQC).

While half of the workers surveyed said that their company proclaims quality as extremely important, only slightly more than a third believed their company followed through well. Almost as many workers are dissatisfied (25 percent) with quality improvement efforts at their companies as are satisfied (29 percent).

Perhaps most telling, two out of three employees said they have been asked to be involved in decisions, but only 14 percent believe they are completely empowered to make those decisions.

And ASQC president, John J. Knappenberger, with more than 20 years in the quality field, doesn't dispute the findings.

"I'm not surprised the quality message hasn't reached everyone," said Knappenberger, also vice president for quality for the automotive division of TRW, Southfield.

The overall survey results, Knappenberger said, reveal two key problems: the need by both manufacturing and service industries to embrace a new definition of quality and adopt management styles that don't waste human resources.

"Traditionally, quality has been defined by specifications and by the manufacturer. Actually, the manufacturer doesn't define quality; the customer does," Knappenberger said. He added that "quality was traditionally seen as a product, but quality is everything we do."

NOT ONLY DOES the customer define quality in today's world, but its definition keeps evolving. Companies must anticipate and keep ahead of customer expectations to succeed.

"This concept of quality extends beyond manufacturing and has been transformed into all areas of business," Knappenberger said. "We all believe that we deal with customers well, but how many employees have actual contact with people? In manufacturing, it's a very small number. Even in service industries, it's still a small percentage of the whole."

Knappenberger gave the example of trying to check in at a hotel, only to find that the computer is down. He vented our frustrations at the hotel clerk, Knappenberger said, but "the actual decision to shut down the computer was made by an employee elsewhere, distant from actual customer contact."

Such employees as the computer controller must have an understanding of real customer needs, Knappenberger said. "Too many people inside organizations don't understand the linkage to external customers."

Knappenberger does claim some recent American success stories, citing companies like Xerox, Milliken and Co., and the Cadillac Division of General Motors as having quality and customer satisfaction as business fundamentals. All have won the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality Awards, established by Congress in 1987 and administered in part by ASQC.

But only 37 percent of the workers surveyed this year think that the United States is gaining on foreign competitors. In contrast, 51 percent of executives polled in 1989 by Gallup for ASQC said the United States was gaining on foreign competition.

KNAPPENBERGER believes the new concepts of quality demand new leadership styles and skills from management.

"Employees want to be involved. We talk a good game but we really don't empower employees," he said.

His message to managers: Give up some power. Let individuals use their creative juices. Be a coach or facilitator rather than an inspector or checker.

"We need to get all people involved and empowered. We can no longer mandate people to improve quality; we have to excite them. Those in leadership roles have to be willing to give up some control and have faith in the results."

While Knappenberger said that this should lead to better quality and more fulfilled employees, he conceded that "this is a whole different flavor for management than in the past. It is like the first lieutenant asking, 'How can I take that hill?'"

Please turn to Page 2

John J. Knappenberger
new definition of quality needed

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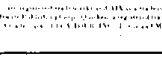
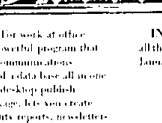
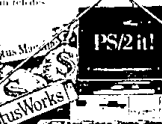
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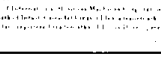
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