

# Frame On Management

## INDIVIDUALIZE YOUR MANAGEMENT

By Ron Frame

A pastor friend remarked to me after a particularly difficult marriage counseling session, "Loving people is really pretty easy; the difficulty arises in loving them one at a time." Much the same can be said about managing people; the challenge, or to be a bit negative, the problem, lies in the one-on-one aspects of the relationship.

Like managers in many professions, superintendents tend to speak in terms of groups — usually crews. Reference to groups is certainly conversationally convenient, but such "group-speak" offers even more; it keeps us safe through anonymity, it neutralizes the power and dilutes the impact of individual personalities, it establishes a "King's X" protection from responsibility (everyone knows that there are "individual exceptions").

The fact is, "group-think" is damaging to management effectiveness. Superintendents do manage crews, but to do so properly requires that they manage the individuals comprising the crew. Management is inescapably a one-on-one relationship between the manager and the managed. The entire fabric of the human resource management process is predicated upon the idea that one individual (the manager) acts and another (the managed) responds.

The management action may be directed at a group of subordinates (a crew), but each member responds to it as an individual, whether properly or improperly. Policies are written for the group, but are followed or violated by individuals; plans are prepared on the valid assumption that individuals will implement them; responsibility and authority are delegated to individuals; problems are both created and solved by individuals; people are hired as individuals and fired the same way.

But still, the concept of people management is almost always considered a group process. Remember those cliches' common to advice on managing people?

"You must treat everyone alike," "individual favoritism is the father of unionization," "you must not discriminate; if they work as a group, treat them as a group," "keep the staff at arm's length, it doesn't pay to get to know individuals too well."

Vince Lombardi was reported to have said, "Teamwork never won a football game; individual effort to achieve understood team goals makes for winning teams. No football game has been won without those individual efforts."

In truth, a manager manages one person at a time. Each person is an identifiable, individual resource for the accomplishment of organizational goals. As such, each person must be selected carefully, trained unendingly, maintained in both preventative and emergent ways and provided with means of motivation leading to profitable levels of productivity. These are management responsibilities that simply cannot be discharged through other than an individualized orientation.

A manager's personal career rests heavily upon the people he manages. The reverse is also largely true — their successes depend heavily upon him. It is a mutual thing, boss and subordinate, each contributing to each other's success. It's a function of morale — the enjoyment of success — and

morale is best available through a process of recognition; individualized recognition through individualized management.

Does all this sound a little exaggerated? Perhaps that depends upon your personal vantage point; that of the manager. But keep something securely in mind; while you may be a manager of a group, you are also managed within a group! From that perspective, how does the importance of individualized management look to you?

*Editor's Note: Ron Frame is an independent Human Resource Management consultant with a ten year practice focusing upon training and development in management processes. He works primarily through the presentation of speeches, workshops, seminars and individual tutorials for a wide variety of clients on a national scale.*

*He is a native of Kansas and was educated at the University of Kansas with academic concentrations on Business, Psychology and English. His professional employment includes fifteen years in banking and higher education. He has served GCSAA as a consulting faculty member since 1975, conducting seminars and workshops regionally and at each annual conference and show.*

*The direction of his twenty-five years experience has been upon the human aspects of organizational and managerial effectiveness. He views employees at all levels as being resources for the achievement of organizational goals; resources that are expensive to the extreme and require both development and conservation to serve the organization effectively.*



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