

MANAGEMENT IS MISSING IN CHANGE MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

We have been working together as husband and wife, as management professor and management consultant, and as coauthors for over 30 years. During that time, we have tailored an operations research–based approach to represent the functional infrastructure of organizations as networks of agreements for the transfer of deliverables, e.g., products, services, and communications, which connect internal organizational units and also their external relations. The network model is useful to understand organizations, support organization change, and develop management practices that improve efficiency, teamwork, and effectiveness. Throughout the application of this approach, we have observed often that “management is missing,” in organizations in general and in organization change management in particular, where managers and change agents may underestimate or fail to recognize the productive relationships at the foundation of performance in organizations, that these relationships are different from authority or social affinity relationships, and that they require management. In this chapter, we distinguish the network approach that is fundamental to our work and the “missing” elements of management that are recognizable by using that approach. We then examine how “management is missing” in change management and how it might be restored.

Keywords: Organization change; change management; elements of management; agreements; performance network; change implementation; accountability

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ODC research” (quoted from the award). We are pleased to be included among the list of outstanding collaborative authors who have preceded us in this award: Hinings and Greenwood (2015 winners), Mirvis and Marks (2016 winners), Calas and Smircich (2017 winners), and Quinn and Cameron (2018 winners).

Like them, we have found collaboration to be very rewarding as each of us brings a different perspective that challenges and questions the other’s view on the one hand and supports and validates it on the other. Laurie, as a PhD in Operations Research Engineering and a full-time management consultant (now retired), brings a practical and applied perspective based on her doctoral work on network optimization and years of consulting with a large variety of organizations on the implementation of change. Jeffrey, as a PhD in Organizational Behavior and a professor of management (now retired) specializing in organizational change, brings a conceptual, theoretical, and research-based perspective. As our book publisher once told us, “Yours is a marriage of theory and practice.” Or, as Laurie puts it, “I practice what Jeffrey teaches and he teaches what I practice.” But we are more than a marriage of theory and practice; we are also husband and wife.

As the 2019 recipients of the Pasmore-Woodman award, we, like those prior, were invited to write a chapter on a subject of our choosing for this issue of ROCD. We considered numerous topics related to our previous work on conversations (Ford, 1999a, 1999b; Ford and Ford, 1995, 2002, 2008a) and resistance (Ford & Ford, 2009a, 2009c; Ford, Ford, & D’Amelio, 2008; Ford, Ford, & McNamara, 2002). Although there is much more that can be said in each of these areas, we elected to write on a topic we feel is missing in both the literature and the practice of change management: management. As a result of our collaboration, we have developed a particular understanding of and approach to organization change based on the application of Laurie’s doctoral work on network optimization theory in her consulting practice and in Jeffrey’s teaching working professionals on the implementation of change in the MBA programs at the Ohio State University. This approach has guided our thinking and writing over the past several decades, and, as we briefly articulated elsewhere (Ford & Ford, 2008b), it is the basis for our claim that management is missing.

THE ESSENCE OF MANAGEMENT

Management is a function of communication, utilized to clarify, coordinate, and update goals, agreements for performance, and accomplishments; it is not a staffing or structural matter, nor a function of personality or style. When we talk about management, we are referring to a set of practices or steps, i.e., a process, rather than referring to a collection of people at higher levels of authority or people with certain titles in an organization. As a practice, anyone can engage in management regardless of position or title.

The purpose or function of management is to accomplish something specific, which has been attributed to Drucker as “getting things done.” Although it is possible to engage in management to accomplish a personal project such as losing

weight, management in organizations and the conduct of change typically involves coordinating the contributions of multiple individuals and groups. Hence, the reference to management as “getting things done through others.”

Management is intentional: it doesn’t “just happen.” Management is something that one brings to the endeavor of achieving a specific outcome or result. Historically, the term management derives from the Latin word “*manus*,” meaning “hand,” referring to the handling of reins to steer a team of horses along the path to a chosen destination. To accomplish that, the handler of the reins needs three things. First is a clear goal, i.e., the destination, for both the work of the team and the work of steering the team. Second is a system of communications between the “steerer” and the team, for giving directions and receiving feedback, perhaps with a tug to the left or right, or a yank to raise or lower speed; both the driver and the team understand these communications. Third is feedback on progress, with course-corrections as needed and recognition of team members for their contributions, perhaps again through those tugs and yanks or other interactions, such as a rubdown, a blanket, and a bin of oats on arrival.

Management is more complex in organizations with multiple individuals and groups, especially when including relationships with external suppliers, partners, and customers. The accomplishment of any organizational goal is likely to involve interactions with, and contributions from, many different types of participants, each with distinct responsibilities and speaking in the languages of their unique areas of expertise. Further, the interactions will involve sending and receiving various combinations of products, services, and/or communications, also known as “deliverables,” to and from specific others at different times and places. These interactions will usually occur among people who are also working to accomplish their other goals and objectives of their own.

The interactions, exchanges, and transfers *between* the goal participants are the subject of network management, rather than the tasks, behaviors, or attributes of the participants themselves (Ford & Ford, 2008b). The relative simplicity of a reins-handler and a team of horses only provides a starting metaphor for the challenge of management, whether of an organization, a change initiative, or a project. But that foundation is still valid: the need for a goal; the need for a system of communications among participants; and a method for keeping participants on the path to the destination, from goal statement to goal accomplishment. The number, type, and coordination of participants playing a role in reaching a stated goal, along with communicating across organizational boundaries to keep everyone on track, can bring a daunting complexity. Structures for working with such complexity provide a necessary support for visualizing productive relationships, coordinating players, and facilitating the processes of “getting things done.”

THREE ORGANIZATION NETWORK MODELS

Most depictions of organizations take the form of a network: a collection of nodes, also called vertices, that are connected by links, also called arcs or

connections. When a network is used to model an organization, the nodes typically represent individuals or groups in the organization, but can also represent other entities external to the organization, or even other networks, as in the case of nested networks (Moliterno & Mahony, 2011). An organization may, for example, have an order fulfillment network comprising individuals and groups from different units within the organization as well as external suppliers, distributors, and customers. Amazon has multiple such networks that vary depending on the type of products or services being handled. The architecture of networks, i.e., their structure and topology, particularly social networks and their relationship to various outcomes, has been an area of study in organizations and is generally well understood.

Our interest and focus, however, is not so much on network structure per se, but on “the [performative] dynamics that take place along the links,” as these are not well understood (Barabasi, 2003). The links connecting any pair of nodes in a network can represent either a tangible or an intangible relationship, interaction, or exchange between pairs of nodes. Tangible connections, such as the transfer of products, provision of services, and/or exchange of communications, are represented by arrows that show the directionality of transfer from a sending node to one or more receiving nodes. These links can be assessed on their effectiveness and reliability, e.g., the probability of success or failure in meeting agreed schedules and other specifications for the delivery of products, services, and/or communications.

Intangible links, connecting nodes simply using lines rather than arrows, stand for relational attributes such as authority, trust, or friendship, in which there is no accounting for any movement of goods, services, or communications between the nodes. Intangible relationships may be assessed or weighted based on descriptive attributes of the quality, quantity, and/or frequency of interactions, as with strong or weak ties (e.g., Cross, Liedtka, & Weiss, 2005; Pfeffer, 2008) between the nodes involved.

Authority Networks and Social/Affinity Networks: We differentiate among three different types of networks in organizations: authority, social/affinity, and performance networks. Authority networks are traditionally modeled as a hierarchical “tree” network, as shown in Fig. 1, where the nodes represent formal or designated groups in their respective positions of authority. The links between them, shown as lines, represent the authority or power relationships, e.g., who reports to whom. Authority links are intangible and use the “altitude” of each node in the tree network to indicate its relative hierarchical ranking – high, middle, or low. The name assigned to each node designates the area or domain over which it has authority, e.g., marketing, IT, R&D, etc.

A social/affinity network may be constructed from surveys that identify, for example, who people like best, interact with most frequently, or seek information from. In these networks, the nodes represent individuals or groups; the intangible links between them are interpersonal and experiential, such as affinity, friendship, and trust. Social/affinity links, also represented as lines, can be assessed on the strength of the relationship each node assigns to another, regarding one or more attributes of personality, preference, or influence. Social/affinity networks can

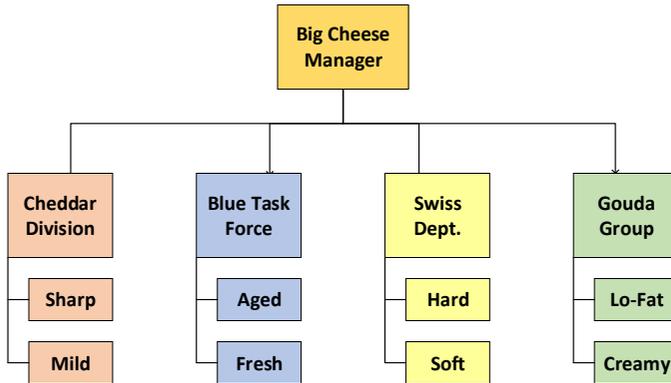


Fig. 1. Sample Authority Network.

also overlap some elements of an authority network, as when people in an authority relationship also have personal connections with one another. Much of the research on networks in organizations has focused on the structure or typology of social networks and the relationship of those structures to various organizational or personal outcomes such as leadership, innovation, change agent effectiveness, etc. (Battilana & Casciaro, 2012; Brown & Quarter, 1994; Mohrman, Tenkasi, & Morhman, 2003; Tenkasi & Chesmore, 2003).

Performance Networks: A performance network is an arrangement of the nodes, representing the individuals and/or groups that are participating in the accomplishment of a specified goal. To accomplish that goal, these “player” nodes send and receive agreed-upon goal-relevant products, services, and communications to and from one another, creating what is known as a performance relationship. These relationships are established either by the nodes themselves or by others, e.g., bosses or predecessors, for the purpose of contributing to the accomplishment of the stated goal of the network.

The performance network is sometimes called an “invisible network” because people working in organizations primarily notice people, tasks, and organizational subunits. They don’t always see, or consider their workplace to be, a network of deliverable products, services, and communications connecting elements of the organization to one another and often to external elements as well. As a result, when there is a specific goal to be achieved, people do not reliably focus their attention on upgrading the agreements for those “deliverables” between groups. Rather, they may look to see how to update their own tasks or processes, only some of which may link to other units, or to provide training programs and other knowledge-development workshops that alter behaviors internal to the nodes rather than address their incoming and outgoing deliverable relationships with others.

In a sample performance network model, shown in Fig. 2, the links between nodes identify the agreed-upon and goal-relevant products, services and communications that will move between them, with arrows indicating the directions of transfer from sender to receiver. The communications that establish those

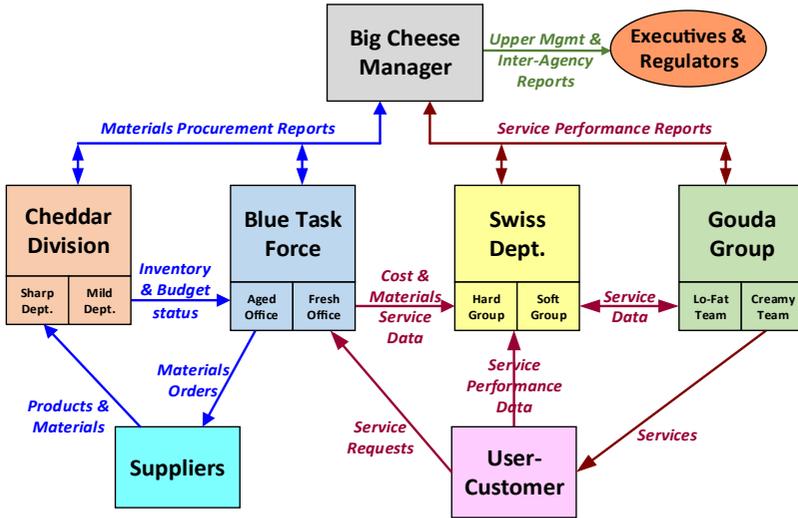


Fig. 2. Sample Performance Network.

paths of delivery are the agreements made for deliverables by each pair of directly connected nodes. These agreements, which may have been created recently or in the distant past, establish the identity of sender(s) and receiver(s), the delivery schedule(s), and the specifications for each product, service, and/or communication to be delivered.

This sample performance network’s goal – i.e., the reason for those specific deliverables shown in Fig. 2 – is to provide what is needed for the timely, complete and accurate *Management and Inter-Agency Reports* that go from the Big Cheese node to the Executives & Regulators node. The various agreements between each pair of nodes and/or subnodes constitute a performance relationship between that pair of nodes, which has been designed and established to accomplish that goal. The success of the relationship can be assessed by tracking and reporting the delivery and receipt of each deliverable and the degree to which its delivery matches its agreed-upon specifications and delivery time(s).

There are several answers to the question, “Why manage agreements for deliverables instead of managing people, tasks, and behaviors?” First, in another historical note on language, the word “performance” is derived from two words: “provide” and “thoroughly.” This derivation suggests that a performance relationship between any pair of individuals and/or groups in a performance network will include an agreement for the specifications of their goal-relevant products, services, and/or communications, so that the sender can “provide thoroughly” to the receiver, satisfying their agreement.

Second, management of agreements rather than people and activities puts attention on the products, services, and communications that can be perceived in the world “outside the box” rather than on the relative power status, opinions, or

subjective perceptions of internal tasks and behaviors of individuals and groups. That is not to say there is anything wrong or irrelevant about status, opinions, or tasks and behaviors, but that directing people's attention to what they are providing to their internal and external "customers" is what enables an organization's overall performance success. Focusing on agreements and deliverables requires that nodes adapt their tasks and behaviors to successfully produce and send those deliverables that provide the agreed-upon goal-relevant value for their receiver (Beer, Eisenstat, & Spector, 1990). Agreeing to provide a higher quality product in a shorter period of time, for example, will require a different set of tasks and behaviors, e.g., a leaner process, than is likely to occur in the absence of an agreement. Clearly, tasks and behaviors are needed to produce and deliver products, services, and communications, but those activities are in service of the agreed-upon deliverables, and thus a secondary focus.

Performance occurs in the relationship between provider and recipient. In a performance network, establishing and maintaining a performance relationship, i.e., a "performance partnership" between nodes, occurs as a product of the communications between each sender and receiver in which they create, confirm, and modify agreements as needed for the goal-relevant products, services, and communications that will move between them. Ideally, these agreements are designed both to accommodate production and/or delivery by the sender, and to provide the necessary value and/or effectiveness for the receiver(s). Where deliveries fully satisfy the agreed specifications, the sender has "provided thoroughly." In the absence of clear agreements, parties in a performance network are left to operate based on what may be historical assumptions and expectations, which can contribute to failures of goal-relevance or value. Accomplishment of a performance network's stated goal, therefore, depends on whether the necessary and appropriate goal-relevant deliverables are delivered as agreed.

In other words, in a performance network, "performance" is determined by what happens on the links *between* nodes, i.e., by the performance partnerships rather than by the tasks and activities occurring within any single node. This changes the subject of "management" from steering people in "doing tasks" to identifying, coordinating, and facilitating the specification and delivery of products, services, and communications with goal-relevant others. Although "doing tasks" is necessary in the production of deliverables, it is the successful delivery of agreed-upon deliverables that constitutes performance.

A PERFORMANCE CIRCLE

A performance network can be customized to show, for any single node, only the set of nodes with which it has direct goal-relevant performance relationships, creating that node's unique "performance circle." For example, the performance circle of the Blue Task Force, shown in Fig. 3, does not include the Gouda Group node nor the Executives and Regulators node, even though they are all in the same (larger) performance network because those nodes have no direct exchange of deliverables with the Blue Task Force. This way of customizing a larger

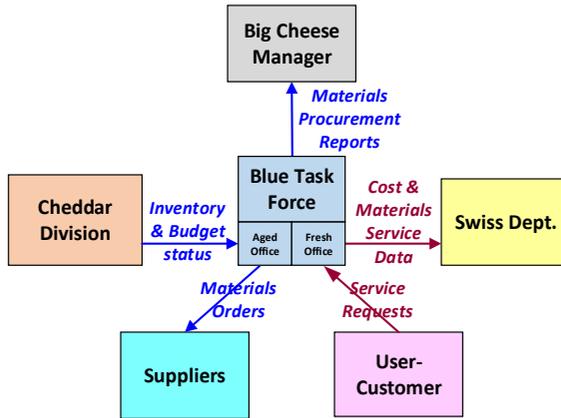


Fig. 3. A Sample Performance Circle.

performance network provides the central node – here, the Blue Task Force – a way of visualizing its responsibilities to create and maintain each of its performance relationships by establishing and managing agreements for the deliverables that will be sent and received between them.

Although the Blue Task Force may have several goals, and thus perhaps several different goal-specific performance circles, in this instance, the goal of the Blue Task Force is to deliver accurate, complete, and on-time *Materials Procurement Reports* to the Big Cheese, as shown in Fig. 3. The delivery of that report satisfies an agreement between the Blue Task Force and the Big Cheese, who needs this report (and those from other units) to produce the organization's *Upper Management & Inter-Agency Reports* (seen in Fig. 2), which will then be delivered to various other corporate executives and external regulatory agencies. The agreement between the Blue Task Force and the Big Cheese regarding these reports will be updated whenever the people who receive those reports choose to revise their reporting requirements.

To meet its agreement with the Big Cheese, the Blue Task Force must receive *Service Requests* from External Customers and *Inventory & Budget Status* information from the Cheddar Division. Agreements with both of those senders are necessary to establish that the accuracy, timeliness, and/or formatting of incoming information will work with the Blue Task Force's data collection and analysis system. If those agreements are not made, are not clear, or are not met, the Blue Task Force will fail to meet the agreement to deliver an accurate, complete, and timely report to the Big Cheese. Further, if the Blue Task Force does not fulfill its own agreements to provide complete and accurate delivery of *Materials Orders* to Suppliers, it could compromise the *Inventory & Budget Status* data it receives from the Cheddar Division, and also the *Cost and Materials Service Data* it sends to the Swiss Department. Those, in turn, could compromise service delivery to User-Customers, due to the interconnectivity of goal-relevant deliverables among players in the larger performance network (see Fig. 2).

The significance of a performance circle is that any one node does not need to manage all the performance relationships in the larger performance network(s) of which it is part. Although satisfying the agreements in each performance relationship in a performance circle will be somewhat dependent on the performance of others to whom it is only indirectly connected, a node can only manage its deliverable agreements with the nodes to or from whom it directly sends or receives goal-relevant products, services, and/or communications. The Blue Task Force, therefore, does not need to be concerned about the indirect performance relationships in the larger performance network of Fig. 2, but nonetheless is dependent on the overall integrity of the performance relationships of others.

It is worth noting that performance networks include people who are also in authority and/or social/affinity networks. When a boss gives an assignment to a staff member to provide a project summary to a prospective client, or when a colleague who is also a close friend requests assistance to install new software, there may be only an expectation that the receiver of the request will perform. Neither authority nor social/affinity connections reflect the fundamental “request + promise = agreement” basis of the sender–receiver performance partnership. When the receiver of the request agrees to deliver what is asked, subject to follow-up on the fulfillment of that agreement, the interaction exists in a performance network, independent of other authority or social/affinity relationship factors.

Although authority and social/affinity connections may be a supplemental factor in some performance relationships, they do not replace the need for clear agreements between parties. The lines of reporting in authority connections, for example, can also support accountability in performance networks. That is not always the case in a social network, however, where close relationships may make it difficult to hold someone accountable for the agreements they have made. Accountability, moreover, does not depend on authority or social connection, but on the willingness of the players involved to have the conversations necessary to establish, track, and fulfill performance agreements. Only in a performance network is there a primary focus on the integrity of agreements for deliverables.

MANAGEMENT IN A PERFORMANCE NETWORK

Management in a performance network is based on communication for the development of goal-relevant performance relationships and their effectiveness, i.e., goal attainment. By communication, we refer to specific types of conversations used and the circumstances or situations in which they are most effective (e.g., Ford & Ford, 1995; Isaacs, 1999; Patterson, Grenny, McMillan, & Switzer, 2002; Stone, Patton, & Heen, 1999). We have identified four different types of productive conversations involved in management in general (Ford & Ford, 2009b) and the conduct of intentional change in particular (Ford and Ford, 1995, 2002). Each of these four conversations serves a different function, such that their pattern of use has an impact on the results obtained (Ford & Ford, 2008a).

Initiative conversations propose something new, e.g., an idea, a change, or a new course of action. Beyond stating the idea itself, this becomes a productive conversation by clarifying *what* exactly is being proposed, *when* it could be utilized or initiated, and *why* it may be useful or valuable. Initiative conversations raise a possibility and, where engaged with, lead to “understanding” conversations in which the contributions of others, both supportive and resistant (Ford & Ford, 2010), can expand the range and depth of the proposal. Proposals offered in initiative conversations can be prospective goals or objectives, but they are not commitments to act.

Understanding conversations are the discussions or dialogues in which people raise questions, offer challenges, and/or provide support to clarify a proposal. Talking about the proposal’s implementation or impact may produce increased awareness, knowledge, and/or new options regarding the terms of the proposal itself as well as exploring *who* else is involved in the goal’s fulfillment, *where* the resources will come from and/or *where* the deliverables will go to, and *how* the change could proceed. By discussing what is involved in making the change and its possible impacts, people leave these “understanding conversations” with more insight into proposed futures and possibilities than they brought into them. They have not, however, committed themselves to anything without making explicit agreements for taking action. In the world of communication, simply understanding an idea is insufficient to cause action.

Performance conversations are in the domain of making commitments. Although understanding conversations will likely contribute to the formulation of agreements, the agreements themselves are a product of making requests and making promises to satisfy those requests. Asking someone, for example, to provide (or obtain) a well-defined and goal-relevant product, service, or communication to (or from) someone else, combined with their acceptance of that request, produces an agreement for a deliverable. It is these conversations that establish the agreements for the deliverables transferred in a performance relationship, for which both parties are accountable and which form the basis for performance in that relationship (Sull & Spinosa, 2007).

Closure conversations are the fourth type of productive conversation, the follow-on for a promised agreement that reveals whether both parties have been responsible for keeping the agreement in play and for fulfilling the agreement for, and performance of, the promised delivery. This is the conversation that establishes accountability for agreements, by regularly tracking, reporting, and updating the status of those agreements. Closure conversations are simply a matter of stating the facts regarding the current status of the agreement and perhaps altering its terms and specifics, renewing the agreement or ending it. As others have noted, these conversations can sometimes be difficult or contentious (Patterson et al., 2002; Stone et al., 1999), particularly where agreements are ambiguous.

The practice of management involves using different types of productive conversations at different times to achieve different results. An initiative conversation is a proposal, not a direct order or random theorizing, and is best followed by a discussion or dialogue. An understanding conversation engages

people in discussing and developing a proposal, clarifying and adding more specifics regarding its implementation. A performance conversation establishes a circle or network of performance relationships, i.e., agreements between parties for the timely delivery of specified goal-relevant products, services, and/or communications, without relying on authority or social/affinity elements as part of those relationships. A closure conversation establishes, confirms, and/or updates the status of performance of the agreement but does not necessarily include an exploration of what worked or didn't work in its successes or failures. An understanding conversation would be needed for that. The appropriate use of these four productive conversations – initiative, understanding, performance, and closure – supports the enactment of all three elements of management – goal, performance network, and reporting/updating.

MANAGEMENT ELEMENTS

Drawing from [Drucker \(1995, 2006, 2007\)](#), [Kotter \(2001\)](#), and the use of network models ([Busacker & Satty, 1965](#)), we can create a simple 1-2-3 set of elements for management in a performance network. These elements can be seen as necessary conditions for developing and succeeding with an initiative, project, or change. Although presented linearly, these three elements are dynamic, as a change in any one of them is likely to require revision(s) or update(s) to those preceding it, just as it will also set or rearrange the stage for those following. Each of the three elements is necessary for management, though there may be many ways to cover the territory of each of them.

- (1) **Goals, Measures, and Schedules:** When embarking on any initiative, project, or change, regardless of its scale or scope, the first requirement for management is to have a clear formulation of the goal or objective to be accomplished. This includes measures (standards, criteria, conditions to be met) to recognize both progress and accomplishment, and schedules or timelines for various steps and for goal achievement. Establishing a goal will answer the questions of “What is it that we want to achieve here?”, “What will tell us if and when we are making progress and going in the right direction?”, and “When do we want to reach our delivery date and our goal?” Clearly communicated goals, measures, and schedules, shared with all participants in the goal's accomplishment and its impacts, are an important support for people to be effectively engaged in its accomplishment. A goal statement supports productive communication among the players in performance circles and networks and facilitates the development and refinement of specifications for desired resources and possible deliverables in the goal-relevant relationships to be developed. In the absence of an intended goal, there is no management, only “doing things.”

The types of communication that get this element of management underway are predominantly “initiative conversations,” which introduce a proposal for a

new course of action, project or change, followed by “understanding conversations” with others who can deepen the discussion for what is proposed, help determine the most useful progress measures, and assist in developing valid schedules (Ford & Ford, 1995). Because the purpose of management is to achieve goals, as evidenced by meeting the measures and the timelines, once these conversations have established clear and useful, goals, measures, and schedules management becomes possible.

Drucker (1995, 2006) proposes that goals be SMART – specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound. The “attainable” part of that acronym could suggest, as some authors have (e.g., Kotter, 2001), that management is limited to the routine and to maintenance of the status quo. Whether a given goal is attainable, however, is not always knowable in advance (Lovallo & Kahneman, 2003), and whether a goal is attained is a function of management. When President Kennedy proposed landing a man on the moon and returning him safely to Earth by the end of the 1960s, the goal appeared unattainable given the existing technology, though people were inspired by the possibility. NASA nevertheless used management to accomplish the goal. The process of management, therefore, is not restricted to the routine or to maintenance of the status quo by the attainability of the goal, but by whether or not the other conditions identified by Drucker obtain.

A goal, with its measures of progress and success and its schedule formulations, together form the bedrock for sketching out plans for performance relationships. It is often useful to test the validity of those three variables – goals, measures, and schedules – from several perspectives, for example, by getting input on them from those who are higher up, and lower down, in the organization, and even from goal-relevant groups inside and outside the organization. Getting input from others can help identify key players in goal accomplishment and clarify the context and utility of the goal–measure–schedule statements, making it easier to communicate and engage others.

- (2) **A Performance Network of Players and Agreements.** The second element of management is the establishment of a system of communications to create and maintain the performance network of individuals and groups that can and will accomplish the goal. This entails answering such questions as, “What resources (incoming deliverables) are needed to accomplish this goal and where can we get them?”, “What will we need to produce and/or deliver, and to/for whom?”, and “Who else do we need to collaborate or communicate with to accomplish the objective?”

Identifying the key players in goal accomplishment and clarifying which deliverables should move from certain Sender nodes to certain Receiver nodes is followed by solidifying those relationships with agreements to produce and/or transfer specific products, services, and communications from Senders to Receivers, by Time (t). In network-speak, this shifts the focus from the attributes and characteristics of the nodes, including the activities and “doings” inside them,

to defining and specifying the deliverables that connect them and establishing goal-relevant agreements for their delivery, thus creating the necessary performance relationships between the nodes of a performance network.

Management is dynamic. The answers to the questions regarding resource and deliverable specifications, schedules, and key players may need to be refreshed on a recurring basis as the initiative, project, or change moves ahead. Answering them may be done at any level, whether a high-level team of executives mapping out a full performance network for a complex multiunit goal or a single group identifying all the others with whom it needs to be directly connected to satisfy its departmental or team goal. The level of network complexity depends on the goal to be accomplished, the number of players involved, and the performance agreements necessary for goal accomplishment.

There are two types of communication that predominate in this stage: “understanding conversations” to explore what accomplishing a goal might entail, who is involved and how it might be done, as well as “performance conversations” to formulate the requests and promises that establish agreements for necessary goal-relevant Sender–Receiver deliverables. Discussions for understanding will identify what is needed for goal accomplishment and who the key players are, as well as considering what each player can provide and/or what they want or need. These discussions can flesh out successive drafts of a goal’s performance network or performance circle, as well as the likely deliverables in that network to support reaching the goal(s).

Performance conversations formulate and establish the agreements that make the network operative and establish the basis for performance accountability. They include requests and promises, and are sometimes referred to as “action communications” (Winograd & Flores, 1987) because they prompt people to adjust their current commitments, calendars, and resource plans. One node in a pair can make a request for a specific deliverable and due date, thus becoming a Receiver for that deliverable. The other node in the pair, by accepting the request, makes a promise to deliver what is requested at the time requested, thus becoming a Sender of the deliverable. As the network of players is assembled, the deliverables connecting each Sender–Receiver pair, including deliverable specifications and delivery schedules, are established to contribute to the accomplishment of the goal or objective.

Of course, real-life requests and promises need to be talked through, perhaps beginning with, “What do you need; When do you need it; and Why does it matter?” Then, of course, there is a wide range of requests. An answer to “What do you need?” may be as simple as, “Will you please pass the salt?” or more complex, as, “We need the information ordering procedures reprogrammed to operate in the new computer system and coordinated with marketing, production, and engineering systems, please.”

The basic formula, though, is, “request plus promise (to accept the request) equals an agreement.” The agreements provide the foundation for both performance and accountability in a performance relationship. Over time, the agreements may need to be modified or eliminated to remain relevant, appropriate, and/or necessary to accommodate changing circumstances. Whenever

new participants are added to the goal-accomplishment (performance) network, agreements need to be created to include them and the agreements with existing elements reconsidered to see what, if any, modifications are required. The goal, measures, and/or schedules sometimes also need adjustment, which may in turn jostle other Sender–Receiver relationships, requiring further agreement updates. The agreements for deliverables within a performance network, however, remain the engine that ignites and sustains the network’s operation to reach the goal.

- (3) **Tracking, Reporting, and Updating.** The final component of management brings accountability to the fore regarding agreements and performance relationships. Accomplishment of a goal requires a system of communication for facilitating the successful fulfillment of agreements in productive relationships throughout a performance network. The intent of this “system of communications,” which includes agreement status updates such as those in after-action-reviews (Darling, Parry, & Moore, 2005), is to keep track of what agreements are now in place, which agreements still need to be finalized, and the performance status of those agreements. A broken agreement, in which some condition is not satisfied, requires a mutual Sender–Receiver reexamination of the agreement to improve performance going forward. Relevant questions include: “Are deliverables meeting the specifications of the agreement?”, “Is there any correction needed make the agreement clearer and more effective?”, and “Are we on schedule?” Integral to these communications is some mechanism for recording agreements and tracking their status, as well as keeping the Goals–Measures–Schedules element of management up to date.

The communication of these updates between each Sender–Receiver pair holds the players in the performance relationship accountable for their agreements. It is often useful, however, to include other performance circle players in those conversations. Whether occurring in face-to-face meetings, by conference call, or online reporting, these reporting-and-updating “meetings” are the frequent and regular (e.g., weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly) follow-through that reestablishes the importance of the goal, measures, and schedules while reviewing and updating the performance of and modifications of agreements.

The conversations that predominate in this management element are “closure conversations,” which include a review of each agreement, the players involved, and the status of the agreement’s performance (or lack thereof). Also included may be proposals for updates as well as new requests, promises, and agreements for actions to be taken by participants. And, of course, each meeting concludes by scheduling the next meeting.

Regular tracking, reporting, and updating the performance status of agreements is the method by which “directing and controlling” performance is sustained, strengthening goal performance and accountability for everyone involved. Rather than treat accountability as a characteristic or attribute of any one node or individual, it becomes an attribute of a performance relationship in which both

Sender and Receiver are in communication regarding fulfillment of the agreement(s) between them, as well as considering their impacts on the success of the larger goal-performance network.

The management challenge of seeing that all agreements are “providing thoroughly” to specifications and schedules, boils down to focusing on goal performance, reliable interactions that support productive and effective relationships in a performance network, and the active accountability reporting to mobilize all network participants for successful goal accomplishment. Success in each element of management is a function of communication and the appropriateness of, and supports for, the conversations used throughout.

MANAGEMENT IS MISSING...

We can define a performance network as a network of nodes, representing individuals, groups, or other organizations or organizational units that are engaged in accomplishing a specific goal, plus the arrows connecting certain of those nodes, representing the agreement(s) for and the transfer of deliverable goal-relevant products, services, and communications between each connected pair of nodes. Such a performance network, as shown in [Fig. 2](#), may also be customized as a performance circle of direct connections organized around one central node, as shown in [Fig. 3](#). What is important about a performance circle or network is that any goal, for any node (or network of nodes), whether representing an individual or an international consortium, is accomplished through the management of goal-relevant agreements and deliverables on the “arrows” linking that node (or network) with other goal-participants that are brought together to accomplish the goal.

The practice of management is deployed for the accomplishment of goals by making, tracking, and reporting on the fulfillment status of the agreements for deliverables between the nodes in one’s performance circle(s). Where current performance is found to be insufficient to accomplish the goal, the goal is either abandoned or modifications are made to the agreements and/or those with whom they are made, until the goal is either accomplished or abandoned. Management, therefore, is dynamic, occurs in interactions within and between network nodes, and can be used by anyone for the accomplishment of any goal, whether routine or innovative, for which the contributions of others are needed.

Attention is given to the deliverable agreements and transactions between nodes, rather than to the activities or tasks occurring within the nodes, i.e., to what they “do.” This shift in focus, which took Jeffrey months to master, is akin to the difference in focus between programmatic change, which is node-focused, and task-alignment change, which is deliverable-focused ([Beer et al., 1990](#)), or between activity-based change, which is node-focused, and result-based change, which is deliverable-focused ([Schaffer & Thomson, 1992](#)). Node-focused changes erroneously assume that changes in the node’s attributes or activities will result in the necessary and appropriate changes in deliverables to and from others.

Furthermore, although elements of a performance network will have authority and social/affinity connections with other elements in the network, those connections are neither the focus nor the source of performance. This means that changes in authority or social/affinity networks themselves will have no effect on performance except as such changes impact the performance network of agreements and deliverables.

...in the Change Process

Based on the preceding discussion, we believe there are several ways in which “management is missing” in change management. First, management is missing when change agents, either as individuals or groups, do not use all three elements of management for the change implementation process. The change process must have a clearly stated goal, measures, and schedules; a performance circle of goal-relevant players and agreements for deliverables to others in the (larger) performance network to support reaching the goal of the change process; and a system of tracking, reporting, and updating the status of performance agreements that facilitate and complete the change implementation process.

Where change agents do not clearly establish what is to be accomplished, i.e., the change goal and its measures of progress, success, and timing (standards, criteria, conditions), management is both missing and not possible. In our review of empirical research on change leadership, we observed that none of the studies clearly defined what was to be accomplished by the change, nor measures for determining progress or accomplishment, nor a time frame for accomplishment (Ford & Ford, 2012). As a result, it was not possible to determine whether the change process accomplished the goal or whether leadership was effective in that process.

Whether change is conducted by a change agent that is an individual, a task team (Duck, 1993) or some form of coalition (Denis, Lamothe, & Langley, 2001; Kotter, 1995), the change agent will be at the hub of a performance circle (see Fig. 3), the peripheral units of which will need to establish performance relationships with other goal-relevant organizational units necessary to meet the goals of the change process. Where change agents fail to create, track, report on, and update deliverable agreements with units in their performance circle, management is missing. Similarly, management is missing if units in a change agent’s performance circle do not create performance relationships with other units in the organization whose contribution is necessary for accomplishing the change. For change agents, direct access for effecting change is with those in their performance circle; indirect access is through the agreement updates made by the directly connected players in updating *their* performance relationships with other nodes. If units in a change agent’s performance circle do not create deliverable agreements and then track, report on, and update those agreements with other units in the organization’s (larger) performance network that will support accomplishment of the change, then management is missing.

Management is also missing in the change process if agreements are not tracked, nor the performance reported, nor appropriate updates made and, preferably,

visible to all change participants. Tracking, reporting, and updating build and support accountability in performance relationships and allow for modifications to those relationships as needed for the implementation of the change. It is not possible to track agreements, however, without keeping a record that allows both Sender and Receiver to see their accountability for, and to report on, their performance relative to the agreement. Without tracking, participants are left with their “recollections” and “perceptions” which are likely to be incomplete, inconsistent, or forgotten, perhaps resulting in disagreements and damaged relationships.

Since each of the three elements of management identified here occurs in communication, we know that where any element of management is missing, communication is an issue (Ford & Ford, 2008a). Some conversations may be misused. Understanding conversations, for example, may assume that when people “understand” the need for action, they will take action; in fact, performance conversations are needed to create explicit agreements. Accountability for taking an action or a project is often assumed to accompany an agreement; in fact, closure conversations are needed to presence accountability. And, some conversations may be ambiguous, as when agreements created in performance agreements lack clarity and parties operate based on expectations rather than agreement.

...in the Change Product

Management is also missing in the new reality *after* the change has been implemented. The issue of goal clarity is particularly important in the case of organization change, where two different goals or objectives are involved. One is the goal for the process of implementing the change. The other is the goal for the performance of the “change-implemented organization” produced by that change process. Consider the example of an organization’s IT director who was assigned the responsibility of implementing a new information system. At a staff meeting after the change process had been declared complete, the CEO asked why she was not seeing any new reports coming from the new system. The IT director replied, “I don’t know, but the system was installed on all the computers and people were trained in how to use it.” This is an example of where the goal of the change implementation process was fulfilled, with the new information system installed and employees trained, but the intended performance of the changed organization’s operations, including the delivery of new reports, was not achieved. Was the change successful? It depends on which goal is considered. A goal needs to be formulated, managed, and communicated for both the change process and the change-implemented organization that results from that process. With only the first phase of the change project, i.e., the change implementation process, being managed, management is missing for the subsequent organization’s performance.

The implementation of a change usually means that a new performance network is in place, perhaps connecting organizational elements by performance agreements with new specifications and schedules for goal-relevant deliverable products, services, and/or communications. Completion of the change process, however, does not mean that the new network of

organizational units is capable of reliable performance. In many cases, the organizational units affected by the change have *not* updated their agreements for deliverables with others in their own performance circle, which means they are operating with performance relationships that have not been revised to integrate the change(s) properly into their own performance networks.

One example is an issue in the learning of organization processes. Once learned, some conversions do not stick due to an absence of management for the newly learned process (Mann, 2015). This has important implications regarding the goal of a change and the time frame in which that goal is to be achieved. If change participants, for example, successfully learn a process by Time (t), but then the process does not stick at Time ($t + 1$), can we say that the change was complete? If changes do not stick, one likely explanation is that management is missing, e.g., not making the goal and measures of the process clear to all process participants, failing to establish or update goal-relevant agreements for deliverables between groups, and/or not tracking, reporting, and updating those agreements as called for by changes in technology, organizational structure, and the change process itself.

...in Our Research

Management is missing in our research. One reason for this is our romance with leadership (Meindl, Ehrlich, & Dukerich, 1985). This romance is reflected in articles that differentiate between leadership and management in a way that glorifies leadership and denigrates management (e.g., Kotter, 2001). Even though these authors see the two as complements, it is leadership that is seen as the key factor in successful change, not management. You will be hard pressed to find any recent publications that focus on the contribution of management to change.

We do not intend to resolve the leadership–management debate here. However, we do feel that the failure to distinguish leadership as a practice, in a manner similar to what we have attempted here with management, contributes to the romance. As a practice, neither leadership nor management is about “who” does it, nor the position from which it is done, because anyone can do either one. For us, there is a simple difference between leadership and management and what each provides. Leadership is proposing or providing a possible goal or objective, e.g., a vision, something that could be done or achieved. The goals proposed may be small and mundane, e.g., a new method for calculating stress, or large and grand, e.g., land a man on the moon and return him safely to Earth. And, leadership engages people regarding the attractiveness and significance of pursuing the goal, which some people refer to as providing “inspiration” or “motivation.” Leadership, therefore, is about creating vision and energizing people with “what could be.” It is not, however, about coordinating people and their agreements along the path to accomplishment, which is the domain of management. Leadership and management complement one another because they are both necessary – one creates destinations, the other accomplishes them.

When we conduct research on the relationship between change outcomes and particular “types” of leadership, e.g., transformational, transactional, and

task-oriented (Ford & Ford, 2012; Oreg & Berson, 2019), we ignore the performance network(s) involved. Although a change agent may engage in both leadership and management, the goal-related outcomes are a function of the management of a performance network for the integrity of the deliverable agreements between nodes. The results produced by the performance network(s) will be the product of management. When we consider only leadership, management is missing, and we end up misattributing the source of change outcomes.

Research shows that change implementations fail for a variety of reasons. Among the primary reasons offered for these failures is resistance to change (Ford & Ford, 2009c). As others have noted, focusing on resistance locates the reason for failure primarily on the change recipients. Ironically, what is missing as an explanation for the failure of change is that the change process and/or the change product – the situation as it exists and operates after the implementation is complete – were not managed. If, as we propose, management is what accomplishes a goal or objective, then the failure to accomplish a goal is a management issue. Not considering management as an explanation for the failure of change is an example of “management is missing.” If we are to fully understand what contributes to successful change, then we need to research the occurrence of management in the change process, i.e., goals, performance networks of agreements and deliverables, and tracking, reporting, and updating the performance of those agreements.

...in Our Teaching

Although we have not done a systematic review of all change management texts, we suspect that management is also missing in the teaching of change management, and perhaps of management in general. Jeffrey discovered in teaching the implementation of change to his MBA classes that the process of management was not systematically covered in available books. Although many topics related to the conduct of change, e.g., stages of change, models of change, resistance, etc. were covered, what is involved in the process of managing a change was missing. What we developed to fill that void is based on what we have presented here.

The result of management being missing from our teaching is that people who are practicing “managers,” and those who simply have the title, are not likely to understand the need for communicating an organizational goal and its measures and schedules to all players, or helping them to customize their own workplace to support the accomplishment of that goal. Many “managers” will not see that the transfers of specific products, services, and communications between different organizational units constitute the infrastructure of an organization’s performance. They will therefore not realize that formulating clear and goal-relevant agreements between Senders and Receivers for those transfers, and that updating them to align with their organization’s current technologies, markets, and goals, is necessary. Similarly, management meetings are not reliably conducted to include status reporting of goal-relevant agreements and their results, which can keep projects or processes operating differently in “disconnected

silos.” Management education can be made more rigorous and effective than it is today, and we all are the people who can change it for the better.

FILLING THE GAPS: RECOMMENDATIONS

The practice of management is deployed for the accomplishment of goals by tracking, and reporting on the fulfillment status of agreements for goal-relevant deliverables (products, services, and/or communications) between the nodes in one’s performance circle(s). Management attention is given to the agreements and the performance of sending and receiving those deliverables *between* nodes, rather than to the tasks, activities, or behaviors occurring within the nodes, i.e., to what people “do.” Our recommendations fall into two categories: those related to the change process and change product and those related to teaching and research on change management.

FOR THE CHANGE PROCESS AND THE CHANGE PRODUCT

Using productive communication, engage in all three elements of management in the change process and the change product.

- Establish and clearly communicate the goals and objectives of the change process including the measures that will be used to determine its progress and success.
- Conduct the change process by establishing and maintaining a performance circle in which the change agent(s) is at the hub. Units in the performance circle are people who will create performance relationships with others in the organization to accomplish the change.
- Establish performance relationships between the change agent and the units of their performance circle by creating clearly stated agreements for product, service, and/or communication deliverables, with specifications and schedules that will support implementation of the change.
- Ensure that units in the change agent’s performance circle create performance relationships with others in the organization on whom they rely for deliverables in support of accomplishing the change.
- Establish a system for tracking, reporting on, and modifying agreements for deliverables between the change agent and units in their performance circle and between units in the performance circle and others in the organization with whom they have established performance relationships for accomplishing the change. Update and modify all agreements and performance relationships as needed to improve progress in accomplishing the goals and objectives of the change process.
- Incorporate the three elements of management into the change product so that once the change is implemented, the newly changed organization is capable of maintaining the change and achieving the intended results.

This includes clearly establishing the goals and objectives with measures of success for the change product; establishing the performance relationships necessary to maintain the implemented change; and establishing the mechanisms for tracking, reporting on, and updating the agreements and results of performance relationships.

FOR CHANGE RESEARCH AND TEACHING CHANGE MANAGEMENT

Add the practice of management “back into” the teaching of change management. This involves educating people in:

- Using productive communication, with a special focus on proposing goals and changes; discussing the players, resources, and results of working to accomplish those goals; creating agreements *between* individuals, organizational units, and with external groups; and periodic reporting on the performance status of goals, measures, and timelines as well as the performance agreements made.
- Setting goals, measures, and timelines.
- Creating and managing performance networks, in which the links *between* units are recognized as having agreements for deliverables to and from various pairs of units, and where these links take precedence over the goings-on within units.
- Tracking – at regular intervals – the status of performance on goals, measures, and schedules as well as the status of agreement performance for goal-relevant deliverables. Support the development of effective reporting meetings that use productive communications to bring the goals, measures, and agreements into view, and to discuss their current performance results and ideas for improving them.

Incorporate the practice of management into research on change. This includes effectively differentiating management from leadership as issues of practice rather than personality or position in organizations.

- Develop appropriate measures to determine the degree of utilization of the three management elements and relate change outcomes associated with the change process to these measures. Since leadership and management are complements, not replacements, both practices should be considered when evaluating change processes and what contributes to their effectiveness.
- Assess both the change process and change product based on their respective goals and objectives and the measures of their accomplishment. The change process is supposed to result in a change product that provides a benefit to the organization undergoing change. If we are to really understand “change management,” then we must consider both the process and the product in our research, lest we provide an inaccurate and incomplete picture of both.

CONCLUSION

We propose that management occurs in the domain of performance networks where agreed-upon transfers of products, services, and communications establish “performance relationships” between organizational units and subunits. This model can also be used as the foundation for goal accomplishment, by creating subnetworks for specific goals involving specific goal-relevant participants who are defining, creating, and updating agreements for transferring goal-relevant and agreed-upon products, services, and/or communications to and from one another.

Organization change processes, therefore, can be seen to change performance in an organization by changing the composition of their performance relationships in a performance network(s). Such changes are implemented through a change process in which (1) the goal of the change is clearly and appropriately communicated, (2) the performance network and deliverable agreements required to implement and sustain the change within the network are established, and (3) the status of the fulfillment of both sets of agreements is regularly tracked and reported, with agreements updated as needed for a more effective performance network. Thus, the change process and the resulting (implemented) performance network are both managed. Where those three elements do not exist or are insufficient, management is missing, and the change will not be “provided thoroughly.”

Although management is instrumental to the accomplishment of change, we contend that management is often missing in the conduct of change, the result of a change process, our teaching of change, and our research on change. This does not mean that all three elements of management are missing in each situation, but that some are missing or are done poorly, e.g., recognizing and updating the existing performance networks and establishing deliverable agreements or updating those that are currently operating unnoticed. The agreements for deliverables between nodes in an organization’s network of units and subunits are the engine for organizational performance and change. If we are to fully understand the accomplishment of change, we need to recognize those deliverable “performance links” to add management back into the formula.

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