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Background

INTRODUCTION

This book will teach you the Dogbert Management Method. All modern managers use this book as their primary guide. When you finish this book you will know what they know:

Leadership isn't something you're born with. It's something you learn by reading Dogbert books.

WARNING

IF YOU ARE NOT A MANAGER, PUT THIS BOOK DOWN RIGHT NOW. THERE ARE SOME THINGS YOU'RE BETTER OFF NOT KNOWING.

DOGBERT'S TOP SECRET MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK

1. Acting like a manager

1.1 TWO PATHS OF MANAGEMENT

In an ideal world, your job as a manager would include setting goals and acquiring the resources to achieve them. But you don't live in an ideal world, largely because there are people like you in it.

Since you don't have the authority to establish goals and acquire resources, you are left with only two logical choices:

ALTERNATIVE

Do nothing.

RESULT

Get fired for doing nothing.

ALTERNATIVE

Do irrational and unproductive things.

RESULT

Get rewarded for being a can-do manager who makes things happen.

To make matters worse, you will be expected to spend as much as forty hours every week doing management stuff, regardless of how much management is really needed. Obviously, unless things are seriously broken, most of what you do will be "filler."

Fortunately, there are many "managerish" things you can do to pack your schedule and make yourself look like a capable executive.

MANAGEMENT TIME FILLERS

- \* Renaming the department
- \* Status reports
- \* Teamwork exercises
- \* Office relocations
- \* Writing mission statements

- \* Random organizational changes
- \* Making view graphs
- \* Micromanagement

## 1.2 MANAGER LANGUAGE

It's not a good idea to refer to the dolts who report to you as dolts. It makes them more dangerous than they already are. Although it can be very entertaining to rile them up, it's not recommended. As a manager you have to learn to be more diplomatic.

Use the more acceptable term "resources." It means the same thing as dolt but for some reason it doesn't get the same reaction. Likewise, the terms "team member" and "associate" should be used instead of the diminutive terms "pud" and "loser," respectively.

The new terms sacrifice nothing in accuracy while doing much for your personal security. In this book I will refer to the people who report to you as "employees" because that term encompasses all of those diminutive meanings.

It's important that your employees think you are smart. Judging from the fact that you're reading this book, you'll probably have to fake it. Listen carefully to the zombie-like speech patterns of other managers and try to imitate them. If you hear a new management buzzword, jump on it like a starving squirrel on the last peanut on earth.

## 1.3 MANAGEMENT ZOMBIE STARE

Combine your new management language skills with the Management Zombie Stare. Learn to hide every trace of comprehension and compassion in your expression. Your face should send this message:

Logic is futile.

Some rookie managers make the mistake of inviting input from the employees, hoping for some valuable insight or contribution. As far as unwarranted optimism goes, this is roughly equivalent to panning for gold in your own shower.

Tip: IF YOUR EMPLOYEES WERE CAPABLE OF GENERATING ANY NUGGETS OF WISDOM, THEY WOULDN'T BE WORKING FOR YOU.

## 1.6 TALKING TOO LONG

Before your rise to power you felt obliged to stop rambling when your listener showed signs of starvation, coma, or rigor mortis. That's all in the past.

If you're part of a meeting scheduled for sixty minutes, feel free to use it all. And remember: Agendas are suggestions, not rules. And rules were made to be broken; therefore, suggestions are made to be ignored.

The last paragraph didn't make any sense, but logic is not a luxury that a busy manager can afford. Sometimes you have to cut corners to make more time for babbling.

As a manager, all meetings have the same objectives for you:

### OBJECTIVES FOR MEETINGS

1. Clear your desk by assigning tasks to the powerless dolts trapped

in the meeting.

2. Exhibit your keen conceptual grasp of the big picture.
3. Babble.
4. Avoid answering any questions.

Sometimes you'll blunder into meetings called by people who have a "mission" or a "purpose" for the meeting. That's the sort of thing they should be doing on their own time, not yours. Ignore their rudeness and proceed with your own good work.

#### 1.7 TECHNOLOGY PRIMER FOR MANAGERS

It is not necessary for you to understand the technology that drives your company, or even the technology that raises and lowers your big puffy chair. You are a manager, not a detail person. And you can pay the "little people" to do the boring technical work for you. However, there are a few key technical concepts you should master to avoid embarrassment.

1. When you fax a piece of paper, your original piece of paper does not actually travel through the phone lines. Nor can you save on travel expenses by faxing yourself to a distant location.
2. If your PC is plugged into the power outlet, that doesn't mean you're connected to the Internet, despite all the hype you hear about how easy it is. You also need software.
3. You don't need to move your desk or put on sneakers in order to be "running under Windows."
4. Ethernet will not make you lose consciousness, even if you sniff a broken cable.

About once a week, you should skim technical magazines -- such as "Newsweek" or "People" -- and ask your staff, "why aren't we doing this?" Then watch them squirm as they try to convince you that it's impossible or hideously expensive. They're lazy and deceitful. Ignore their so-called expertise and demand that they do your bidding.

Try to pick your technology challenges at random, as opposed to choosing those that have some immediate relevance to work in progress. This shows the scope of your intellectual grasp of technology. For example, if your department is building a new customer database, insist that it incorporate the ability to store aromas and music (in case you need those capabilities later).

If you're too lazy to skim technology magazines for good ideas, simply combine any two good concepts, then challenge your staff to make it happen. For example, you could say, "Why don't we make all our electrical outlets digital?" Or "Why don't we get some multimedia fax machines?"

#### 1.8 MANAGING YOUR CALENDAR

Prior to becoming a manager, you handled your own calendar. From now on, your schedule will be managed by a secretary whose goal is to send you to meetings that are far away from the office.

To illustrate this point, let's say your most important priority is to hire additional staff members to improve client service. Your secretary will respond by booking you on a mining expedition to the Axlon Nebula star system. This might not have much to do with your priorities, but the alternative is to make your own appointments, and

that is not what leaders do. Leaders do what their secretaries schedule them to do.

Take Napoleon Bonaparte, for example. He was originally an accounting manager in Paris. But his secretary handled the calendar and she hated him because he had some sort of a short-guy personality disorder that had no name at the time. So his secretary would book him for things such as "Invade Russia during the winter" and "Waterloo -- 2 P.M."

Don't complain if your secretary sends you out of the office. The alternative is worse. If you've been a tyrant lately, your secretary will seek revenge by using the "Idiot Trickle Torture." This involves filling your calendar with slow-talking, dim-witted employees who form a never-ending line outside your office door.

You won't get a lot of work accomplished under this new scheduling system, but luckily, as a manager, your pay is not linked to the quantity of your work. Your pay depends on the appearance of work plus the intangible qualities you bring to the job, such as "leadership" and "motivation." And you can pay other people to do that stuff for you...,

More good news: intangible leadership qualities are difficult for anybody to actually notice. That is your passport to leisure.

Nobody will really know if you're exuding huge quantities of leadership and motivation or if you're just walking around bothering people. To the untrained observer, these activities are identical. So you can do whichever is easier and it will have no impact on your pay.

#### 1.9 BEING LATE FOR MEETINGS

As a manager you are no longer expected to be on time for any meeting with your underlings. They will entertain themselves by making small talk, so named because of the size of their paychecks.

It's easy to calculate the number of minutes to be late: Multiply the number of people in the meeting by three and then show up whenever you feel like it. (It's more of an art than a science.)

Tease your helplessly waiting underlings by walking briskly past the doorway with a document in your hand and saying something like, "I just have to make one phone call." Then leave for the afternoon. They'll still be there in the morning, so there's no reason to make special efforts for people who do not know how to act empowered. They must learn to be independent.

#### 1.10 EXECUTIVE RETREATS

An executive retreat is a process in which all the decision-makers in your company go to a nice resort and ask themselves two questions:

1. How can we make the employees work harder for less money?
2. Why is morale so low?

Both problems are addressed by working on such things as the "mission" and "vision" and "guiding principles" of the company. These activities might not seem directly related to the two questions, but the process is effective because it takes a long time. And the longer the executives are away, the higher the productivity and morale will be back at the office.

#### 1.11 MANAGEMENT PHYSICS

As a manager you are automatically endowed with special powers to manipulate time, matter, and space. You can suspend the relationship between cause and effect and make time move at any rate you choose. This is handy more often than you might think.

Your special powers can be useful when, for example, your lazy employees tell you that an important task will take at least six months to finish. And let's say you just told your boss that the task would take only two weeks. Solution: All you have to do is adjust the time line down to two weeks.

This seemingly simple change will cause a chain of events that will ripple through the fabric of space-time and result in the energy-free transfer of blame from you to your employees at approximately the speed of light.

As a manager you will also be able to control gravity. Sir Isaac Newton showed that dense objects, such as managers, have more gravity.

Your office will become a black hole into which all employee input will be lost forever. No matter how many times your employees give you something -- diskettes, documents, whatever -- you can claim you never got it. Best of all, it's not your fault; it's the law of gravity.

You might wonder how managers acquire these special powers. You've heard how sometimes a blind person develops good hearing. It's like that, except in this case it's more like a blind person who acquires a limp.

#### 1.12 MAKING DECISIONS

Nothing good ever came from a management decision. Avoid making decisions whenever possible. They can only get you in trouble. Here are some good methods for avoiding decisions while still doing stuff that appears managerish.

##### WAYS TO AVOID MAKING DECISIONS

- \* Act confused.
- \* Form a task force of people who are too busy to meet.
- \* Send employees to find more data.
- \* Lose documents submitted for your approval.
- \* Say you're waiting for some other manager to "get up to speed."

#### 1.13 TRUST

Trust is an important asset for a leader to have. That might be a problem if you're a huge, unscrupulous weasel bent on abusing your position of power for personal gain. Fortunately there's a tool for leaders like you too; it's called "lying."

Lying isn't a good idea in nonwork situations because bad things can happen if you get caught. But when you're dealing with employees, they have few retaliatory options as long as you keep the supply cabinet locked. And if you lose their trust, you can always use fear and intimidation to get the same results. There's no real risk.

#### 1.14 LEADERSHIP

Leadership can best be understood by the Alaskan dogsled analogy. It takes several dogs to haul one human in a sled. But if those dogs wisely threaten to bite the human, then that one human can haul many dogs riding comfortably in the sled. Leadership is like that, except

without the dogs and the sled and the frozen tundra.

(Note: I don't know what a tundra is, but I'm pretty sure you wouldn't want yours frozen.)

Leadership skills are quite different from management skills. When you "manage," by definition, you're trying to distribute resources where they will do the company the most good. When you "lead," by definition, you're trying to get those resources distributed to yourself. Obviously, leadership is a better way to go. It's easier too.

Always "lead by example." Let's say you're trying to reduce costs in the company. You can set an example by ordering your chauffeur to get his hair cut at Super Cuts. This is the kind of personal sacrifice that inspires the employees. Soon you'll be able to squeeze their health benefits like a tourniquet on a seedless grape.

You can also agree to share a secretary with another leader to reduce costs. You might have to work that secretary eighty hours a week, until the secretary is bitter and unattractive to look at, but when you make personal sacrifices like this, it's contagious.

Before long, every employee will be willing to take a bullet for you. And if they aren't, just grab one by the arm and pull him in front of you at the last minute. It all works out the same, bulletwise.

Don't get me wrong. Leadership isn't only about selfish actions. It's also about empty, meaningless expressions. Here are a few you should memorize:

- \* Work smarter, not harder.
- \* It's a new paradigm.
- \* It's an opportunity, not a problem.

The whole concept of leadership involves getting people to do things they don't want to do. The trick is to convince employees that they will feel good if they do these things -- not in the sense of having adequate food and shelter, but in the sense that their hearts and souls will be nourished.

Fortunately, their egos are so beaten down that they're like goats trying to munch tin cans -- willing to digest any ridiculous thing you feed them.

You can use these ego-stroking messages to inspire employees to work harder without extra money:

- \* You're a valued member of the team!
- \* Nobody can do the things you can do!
- \* You're helping make the world a better place!

If the employees continue to whine about being paid less than a Uruguayan gnat farmer, that dissatisfaction must be caused by some deep character flaw they invariably seem to have. And that's not your problem. You're busy leading. You can't be a psychiatrist too.

#### 1.15 IDENTIFYING POTENTIAL MANAGERS

One of your jobs as a manager is to identify and promote new managers. Ideally, each new manager should be less qualified than you. Otherwise that new manager will try to take your job and make you look dumb.

It's in your best interest to keep the talent pool as thin as

possible, just as the people who promoted you have done, until eventually the only creatures getting promoted are single-cell organisms.

When we are born, all humans are clueless, self-absorbed, and helpless. Most babies will grow out of it. Those who don't become managers. The adults with management potential are sometimes hard to spot. As a manager yourself, look for these telltale signs of high-potential management candidates.

#### SIGNS OF POTENTIAL MANAGERS

1. When you sit down suddenly, you crush their heads.
2. When they get whiplash from nodding vigorously while you talk.
3. They mimic your mannerisms and appearance in such detail that you can use them as a mirror to locate and remove bits of food from your teeth.

#### 2. Motivating Employees

##### 2.1 EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION

You might be tempted to try and keep employees satisfied in order to maintain productivity. That's not easy. Employee satisfaction can be expensive, sometimes even unhygienic. There is only one germ-free and economical alternative to addressing the employee satisfaction issue. See if you can locate it on this list.

#### EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION ALTERNATIVES

1. Increase salaries.
2. Improve the working environment.
3. Do an employee satisfaction survey and ignore the results.

Choice 3 is the correct answer. But be careful how you design the employee satisfaction survey. If you allow the employees to say what's really bothering them, they might expect to change something; i.e., expect you to do work, and that would pretty much hose all the benefits of this approach.

A good employee satisfaction survey seeks to accomplish one thing: Divert the employees' attention away from the things that really bug them and toward areas that look like their own fault.

These are good survey questions to include.

#### EMPLOYEE SURVEY QUESTIONS (GOOD)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "true" and 5 being "very true."

I know how to do my job and when I fail it's only because I'm either lazy or stupid.

My manager communicates with me often, but I don't pay attention.

The company has a clear vision and strategy but it doesn't seem that way to me because my brain is fuzzy.

My co-workers are a bunch of back-stabbing weenies but there's nothing that management can do about it.

Given the chance, I would gladly accept a cut in pay.

These are some survey questions you want to avoid.

#### EMPLOYEE SURVEY QUESTIONS (BAD)

On a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 being "true" and 5 being "very true."

My boss is an ignorant tyrant.

Working in a cubicle has made my ego shrivel like a raisin on an Egyptian sidewalk.

Everything I do is useless thanks to the constant bungling of management.

I am surrounded by idiots.

My pay is so low compared to other people in my industry that I spend all of my time fantasizing about working at other companies.

## 2.2 HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

The goal of "employee motivation" is to make your employees feel so happy about their jobs that they lose sight of their own best interests.

If your employees are fixated on selfish short-term goals such as food, shelter, and happiness, that is exactly the time when skillful management is most needed. Your challenge is to convince the employees to focus on long-term goals, such as their manager's career.

This concludes the excerpts from DOGBERT'S TOP SECRET MANAGEMENT HANDBOOK by Scott Adams. If you want to read the complete version of the book (with the cartoons that could not be included in the training text), you can purchase it at your local bookstore. The book is published by HarperBusiness, a division of HarperCollins Publishers.