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Naval Postgraduate School Barometer (newsletter), 1970-1975

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Naval Postgraduate School Business School Barometer '70 / v.2-4

Monterey, California. Naval Postgraduate School

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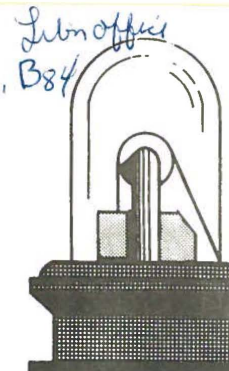
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BUSINESS BAROMETER '70

Vol. II, No. 4

THE CIVIL SERVICE MANAGER--A MILITARY VIEW-POINT

(By LCDR B. J. McGee who is working on a directed study of Military-Civil Service Relationships.)

Civilians in DOD, especially in the higher GS grades, seem to have an inherent distaste for working under military authority, primarily due to the different points of view between the two groups. From the point of view of the military officer, the highest values are loyalty and obedience; the civilian manager emphasizes reason and comprehension above obedience. Many civilians resent the fact that military authority resides in rank and position rather than knowledge of the activity and its operations. Also, they regard time spent in orienting and training officers (new to the organization) as time deflected from their jobs and wasted because the officer will only be aboard for two or three years.

A prime source of dissatisfaction with the civilian manager is that of advancement. Civilians resent the fact that the manning of top managerial and other key positions by military officers preempts these coveted positions and puts a ceiling on civilian aspirations for logical promotions. Civilians hold themselves to be better qualified for their assignments than military officers because of their knowledge of the organization and its functions. They are prone to regard the military officer as a "time saver" with no stake in the organization.

For the above reasons, military officers can never be sure of wholehearted support and loyalty from the civilian group. From a management standpoint, this distrust between the groups leads to unnecessary supervision and control. Also, many organizations will tend to "double staff" key positions with both a military officer and a civilian to alleviate this friction.

Comments should be directed to
SMC # 2540

THE MILITARY MANAGER--A CIVILIAN VIEW-POINT

Mr. W. B. Lockwood, the Civilian Personnel Officer at NPS was asked the following question by The Barometer:

Q. What are the most common negative managerial characteristics you have observed in your relationship with military managers?

A. The lack of basic knowledge and understanding of the civilian personnel philosophy, standards and procedures. The lack of opportunity for military managers to receive training in the art of personnel supervision, particularly within the context of the federal civil service system, leads to many of the following difficulties:

(1) A hostile negative attitude on the part of a military manager toward the civilian system and the people in it.

(2) A negative reaction back to the military manager from his civilian subordinates resulting in bad employee-management relations and low unit productivity.

(3) Acquiescence by the military manager in conduct and/or performance by civilian subordinates that does not meet standards because the military manager (with his lack of knowledge of the system) has either concluded that nothing can be done, or that it is too tedious to rectify the situation by the civil service system.

(4) A liberal "reward" attitude by the military manager when he finds that he has competent subordinates that are performing well. This stems from the fact that the manager probably had low expectations regarding the performance of civilians and when they prove competent he is so surprised and grateful that he initiates upgrading or outstanding performance actions for people who are merely satisfactory in their jobs.

Many of these attitudes and situations exist among civilian supervisors also.