CHAPTER 4

SPONTANEOUS AND REFLECTIVE BEHAVIORS:
An integration of some psychological and process motivational concepts

THE PROBLEM

A manager's function is to influence people to perform with optimum efficiency and effectiveness in the achievement of organizational goals and objectives. But some managers in today's environment are frustrated when the people around them behave in ways the manager did not anticipate. This frustration is increased when the motivational and psychological concepts that the manager found useful a few years ago no longer seem to help him or her very much today. To some managers their people often appear to behave erratically in response to a wide range of disparate influences.

As managers see the motivational and psychological concepts with which they are familiar having a decreasing usefulness, they also see the increasing difficulty and complexity of successfully influencing others. “The manager needs to look at the employee not as a problem to be solved but as a person to be understood”.[1] In his book, Power and Influence[2], John P. Kotter observes that our organizational environments are becoming increasingly complex, resulting in considerable "interdependence" between a wide range of people having considerable "diversity" with respect to "goals, values, stakes, assumptions and perception". In their book, Power and the Corporate Mind[3], Zaleznik and Kets de Vries observed, "People are products of experiences they have never relinquished. Personal history will always make its claim even though it operates silently, and paradoxically, usually beyond the individual's awareness". As the diversity in people's personal history increases, so does the difficulty of understanding and influencing those people.

Apparently, “Good leadership and management are infused with artistry”.[4] A few managers skilled in these “arts” seem very adept at understanding and influencing the behavior of those around them, and we can learn from these managers' experiences. Let's look at an example of unanticipated behavior and the successful actions taken by a senior manager to influence a subordinate and thereby correct the situation.

Joe Reed, a Division manager in a progressive high technology company, was having a stressful day. He had had an argument at home, he had a very tight schedule, much incoming paper work, and several important decisions to make under severe time pressure. One decision was which of his subordinate managers to recommend for a career enhancing three month assignment at a distant location. In his rush to get on to other things, Joe nominated Art White for the job, even though he felt Kay Cook was more qualified. Both Art and Kay had families, but Joe felt that Kay would not want to leave her children and therefore would be reluctant to accept the assignment.

Vice President Dan Stone had worked with Joe Reed for many years. When Joe's nomination of Art White hit his desk for approval, he was puzzled. His first reaction was to telephone Joe and ask why he had not nominated Kay. After reflection, he decided on a less direct approach. It was Dan's style to "manage by walking around"[5], and later that morning he stopped in on Joe Reed to ask, "How are things going?" During this informal discussion, Dan learned of the pressures Joe felt and was able to deduce that Joe's nomination of Art was influenced by these pressures. Had Joe been under less pressure, Dan felt, he would have nominated Kay, the more qualified person. Dan sensed, however, that if he brought this up directly, Joe would become defensive and rationalize his recommendation of Art. Dan wanted to correct the situation, and decided on an indirect approach to give Joe time to think. Late that day, at the end of a regular meeting with all of his division managers, Dan spent several minutes reemphasizing the company's policy of promoting and offering assignments to the best qualified individuals regardless of race, age, sex or seniority. He did not mention any specific instances.

The next morning, Joe called to suggest that Kay Cook be offered the assignment instead of Art White. Joe said he did not expect Kay to accept but would be glad to make the offer to her. Dan approved the change, Joe offered Kay the job, and, to his surprise, she accepted with obvious delight.

ANALYSIS

In this case, Dan Stone successfully influenced Joe Reed to reconsider and make a more functional decision. Apparently Stone understood that people may not always respond as those around them anticipate. Although neither psychological concepts [e.g. personality types[6], operant conditioning[7], etc.] nor motivation concepts [e.g. needs[8], expectancy[9], or equity[10] theories] by themselves seem to explain the observed behavior, some insight can be gained by combining parts of these concepts with recognition that a person may respond to any situation with one of two general types of behavior: "spontaneous" which implies instinctive and/or instantaneous behavior or "reflective" which occurs after taking time to think before taking action. Henry A. Murray[11] first described these as "reactive" and "proactive", but these terms have recently acquired meanings not consistent with our usage, and therefore, we adopt the terms "spontaneous" and "reflective". Thus, in our increasingly complex environment, people may be spontaneous or reflective in response to both psychological and motivational influences. To gain insight, managers need to understand these psychological and motivational influences as Dan Stone apparently did.

From the management and psychological literature and the organizational observations that we have made over forty years, we have identified two sets of influences on reflective behavior and one set of influences on spontaneous behavior. Reflective behavior is influenced by the expectations the individual perceives that others in the organization have of him or her, and vice versa, i. e. the "psychological contracts"[12] with others in the organization which are related to the expectancy theory of motivation (endnote 7), and/or the individual's self-concept[13], including his or her belief systems which are related to the equity theory of motivation (endnote 8). Spontaneous behavior is influenced by an individual's personal attributes, "usually beyond the individual's awareness" (Zaleznik op. cit.), which derive from psychological concepts such as genetic and environmental forces, personality (Hall & Lindzey op. cit.) and the totality of the individual's life experiences (personal history) including education, cultural background, early childhood experiences, and acquired biases. Individuals tend to be spontaneous when under time pressure or stress and reflective when they have the time and inclination to think before acting.

Realistically, individuals cannot always consciously think before they act any more than they can always consciously think before breathing or blinking their eyes. There will be situations, perhaps many situations, when a person will be spontaneous.

These sets of influences help the executive understand, as Vice President Dan Stone did, that actions derive from multiple, not singular, influences and that an individual's (e.g., Joe Reed's) behavior may be either spontaneous or reflective in a situation depending on which set of influences, and even which influences within the set, are dominant at the time. From the executive's point of view, the response of an individual derived from one set of influences may not be the one most in line with organizational goals and objectives. By understanding the three sets of influences unique in each person, and the probable spontaneous or reflective behavior deriving from them, executives can assess which behavior is likely to be most in line with organizational objectives and can then chose a strategy to act in ways to maximize the probability of eliciting the most appropriate behavior.

The remainder of this chapter will do five things.

1) Explore the three sets of influences as derived from the literature and observation, namely, expectations, self-concepts and personal attributes;
2) Examine the spontaneous and reflective behaviors that originate from these three sets of influences;
3) Present the three types of predictions a manager can make regarding spontaneous and reflective behaviors and the six strategies that a manager can use to influence behavior;
4) Look at examples of managers using these six strategies to influence reflective and/or spontaneous behavior more effectively and;
5) Show how a manager can use these concepts (as Dan Stone did) to predict likely behaviors and then choose a strategy to maximize the probability of positively influencing people to act in ways that maximize their contribution to organizational goals and objectives.

<u>Sets of Influences Explored</u>

Expectations

When an individual enters into a relationship with another individual, or joins a group or organization, a set of expectations is formed by each of the parties with respect to their own actions as well as the actions of the other party. Individuals who accept employment with a new group or organization accept what they understand to be their new manager's expectations of them as well as the group's values, culture and norms. In addition, they have expectations of their manager's and the group's or organization's behavior toward them. People accept employment in order to receive the rewards of affiliation and consciously try to conform to their manager's expectations of them, that is they behave "reflectively". Using expectancy theory (endnote 7), this might be rephrased as people accept employment because they perceive that there is a high probability that their efforts will yield an adequate level of performance and that the rewards received there from will justify the effort (Motivation = probability that effort will yield performance times the probability that the performance will be rewarded times the value of the reward expected). Managers should recognize that performance related rewards as described in expectancy theory are important but that the other rewards of affiliation are also important.

Thus, managers can enhance their ability to influence reflective behavior by making their expectations in a relationship as explicit as possible and verifying what they understand to be the other party's expectations of them. Unfortunately, a clear understanding of expectations is seldom achieved initially because both parties to the relationship usually make implicit and unverified assumptions. When there is congruence of common social or cultural experiences those assumptions may be accurate but where there is diversity in backgrounds they may not be[14]. Since diversity in organizations is increasing, (Kotter, op. cit.), important inexplicit expectations may not be mutually understood.

As time passes, expectations in a relationship change as a result of the evolving environment or from the changes in one or both of the parties to the relationship. In the absence of explicit renegotiations, differing assumptions may lead to differing expectations. To maximize their ability to influence, effective executives need to renegotiate mutually acceptable expectations periodically or whenever they sense possible changes. It is even better to have each of the parties involved put their understanding of the other parties expectations in writing.[15]

Even so, mutually agreed upon expectations may not always yield the reflective behavior expected. Individuals have many relationships in organizations, some with conflicting sets of expectations. An individual's conduct conforming to the manager's expectations is often different from that conforming to the expectations of spouses, subordinates, peers or other superiors. For example, when a manager promotes a member of a group to head that group, the manager expects the new supervisor to act in ways that conform to the role of "supervisor" (i. e. the manager's expectations). However, the remaining members of the group may still expect that individual to continue to behave as a peer and see the new behavior as unwarranted and insensitive. These conflicting expectations may lead the new supervisor to make compromises. Managers should recognize that people have numerous relationships that may sometimes cause them to compromise, yielding reflective behavior somewhere between the conflicting expectations.

Self-concept

All individuals have a perception or mental picture of themselves. This self-concept (Combs and Snygg op. cit.) includes belief systems[16], self expectations, intrinsic motivations[17], and concepts of fairness and equity that have evolved over time.[18] Self-concept influences reflective behavior when relationships change and/or the individual's belief systems are involved. For example, this happens with the establishment of, or significant changes in, relationships and the expectations that go with them, such as joining or leaving an organization, forming or ending a relationship, job changes, promotions, or relocations. Belief systems come into play in situations involving career development activities, or some kind of trauma or crisis involving perceived competence, ethics such as honesty, fairness justice and equity or legal issues. Although these kinds of situations do not occur on a daily basis in organizations as do routine situations which are more directly influenced by expectations, they are usually important when they do occur. Therefore, in situations involving these issues or changes, the ability of executives to negotiate mutually acceptable expectations and obtain the desired performance is enhanced by understanding the self-concept influences of those concerned.

Once the set of expectations involved in a new or changing relationship is accepted, small changes may occur over time that result in actions inconsistent with the individual's belief system. When this happens, the individual usually modifies his or her self-concept to fit the actions[19]. For example, in the late sixties and early seventies, some young people had belief systems that led them to oppose the Vietnam War. As a result, some of them refused to accept work for, and the expectations of, defense contractors. Others accepted such employment and after a period of time modified their belief systems to do work which they had previously thought they would not do.

Personal Attributes

Psychologists have argued for many years over the extent to which people's behavior is influenced by genetics and/or environment. While differing on the degree, most psychologists today acknowledge that both personality and previous experiences have an influence on the way people behave[20]. An individual's personality in an organization is relatively stable and leads that individual to display specific personal characteristics (e.g. a tendency to be: outspoken or quiet; practical and observant or intuitive and imaginative; logical and cold or empathetic and warm; adaptive and flexible or organized and decisive[21]). At the same time, individuals learn from, and are influenced by, the people around them, their environment and their culture. Rewards or pleasure are reinforcing experiences that tend to influence the individual to act in ways to gain additional rewards or pleasure (Skinner op. cit.). Conversely, punishment or pain are inhibiting or displacing experiences which tend to influence the individual to act in ways to avoid the punishment or pain. Effective executives are cautious in using punishment since the actions taken by the individual to avoid punishment may not be those desired. For example, subordinates punished for being rude to customers, or peers, may avoid further punishment by avoiding contact with customers, or peers, rather than learning to be more polite.

Personal attributes developed from childhood experiences may exert a powerful influence on some people. For example, an only child of busy but indulgent parents who gave in to the child's "tantrums" may still throw tantrums as an adult in the work environment. A child who was "framed" by other children to look guilty of various offenses over a long period may have a strong tendency to be suspicious and guarded in his or her work relationships. Children often use one parent as a role model; thus a child of a very demanding father may be very demanding of those around him or her at work.

Personal attributes also derive from the culture of the place and time a person grows up which may exert a powerful influence. For example, a person experiencing deprivation may respond as Scarlet O'Hara did in "Gone With The Wind" when she vows to do anything to avoid being hungry again. Much has been written of the "Vietnam" era and the effect it had on those who grew up at that time. Jokes about the fast paced New Yorkers or the relaxed Southerner are indicative of the geographic influences that may exist. Other powerful influences might include: membership, years earlier, in a highly valued club or organization; an inspirational coach or teacher; a close friend or colleague in an earlier era; a strong role model or mentor; an accident or trauma; and/or military service. Beyond these, subconscious biases may have been acquired which may be negative (e.g. against competitors or people of different ethnic groups or gender) or positive (e.g. towards graduates of specific schools, people from a certain geographic area, or from a preferred socioeconomic class) resulting in behavior leading to self-fulfilling prophecies

(Livingston op. cit.). Any or all of these influences may be evident in the individual's spontaneous behavior at various times.

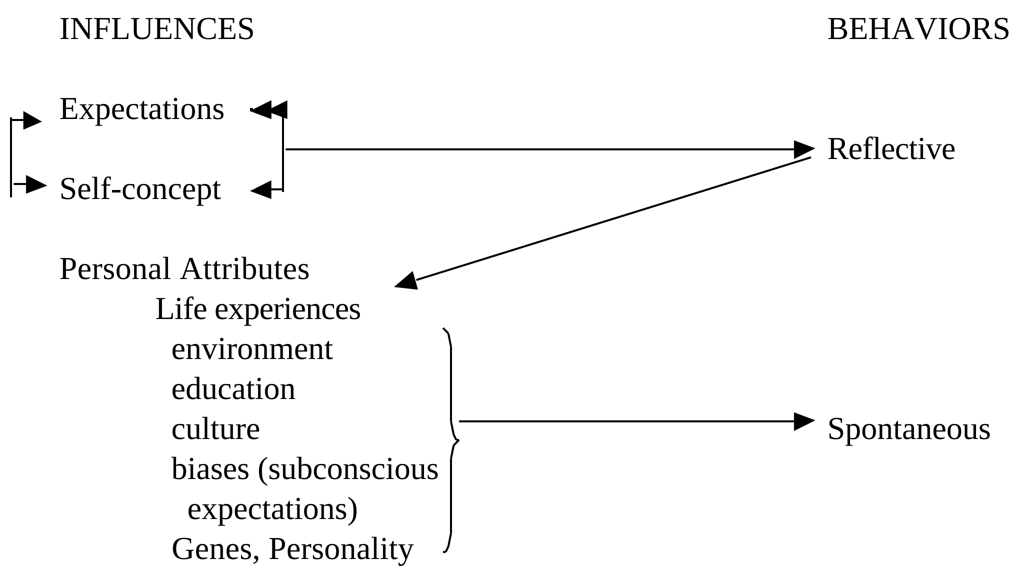
Spontaneous responses are usually dominant when managers are under time pressure, as in the "Joe Reed" case. But, people seldom think they are spontaneous, because if their actions are questioned, they feel attacked, become defensive and rationalize their actions to be consistent with either their self-concept or perceived sets of expectations. Joe Reed's manager, Dan Stone, recognized this and used a non-threatening situation, the meeting, to reassert his expectations (company policy) with all his managers, thus giving Joe the opportunity to reconsider his recommendation in a reflective way, without feeling attacked or being put on the defensive.

An individual's personality and life experiences may or may not be suitable for the job or situation. Truly effective executives in jobs which have behavioral requirements that are suited to the executives personalities and life experiences make excellent decisions spontaneously, using their intuitive judgments[22]. However, even when an executive has personal attributes that are generally suitable for the job, there may be special situations where his or her personality and life experiences might not be suitable. In these situations effective executives switch to become reflective. Thus, many busy and successful executives will put certain issues aside in order to have "more time to think", as a mechanism to avoid dysfunctional spontaneous decisions.

<u>Reflective and Spontaneous Behaviors</u>

Figure 1 represents one way of visually depicting how spontaneous and reflective behavior derive from the three sets of influences, i.e. expectations and self-concept yield reflective behavior, and this reflective behavior becomes part of life experiences which are part of personal attributes, which yield spontaneous behavior.

FIGURE 1
Behaviors Derived from the Sets of Influences



For example, a young Marine officer controls his or her actions to conform to very high group expectations and rather quickly adopts the self-concept and high esprit of "being a Marine". After twenty years, the colonel's actions are spontaneous (habit) and based on experiences he/she no longer thinks about very often. Even if that colonel is in civilian clothes, his/her posture, bearing and other clues suggest "Marine" to an astute observer. In the same way, other organizations or groups impress to varying degrees a set of behaviors on those who remain in them for long periods, for example employees of organizations like Marriott Hotels, IBM or Hewlett Packard as described in *In Search of Excellence* (op. cit.).

The difference between reflective and spontaneous responses can be seen by comparing the way people speak with the way they write. Typically, the difference is not only in vocabulary but also in the way in which they express themselves. Writing takes time, which the brain can use to reflect on what is being written. When people speak, they have far less time to reflect on what they are saying. Generally, writing is reflective while speaking is spontaneous, except when speeches are prepared in advance.

Another example of the difference between spontaneous and reflective responses can be seen when managers change jobs or move up the ladder in professional organizations. Normally, they want to act in ways that conform to their understanding of what is expected of them, given the organizational culture and power structure. Therefore, they are reflective in ways which are congruent with these expectations, but when under stress they are sometimes spontaneous in ways which seem more congruent with past actions and previous life experiences. Thus, the reflective behavior deriving from the expectations and self-concept influences of people can shift rather quickly with changes in status while spontaneous patterns often lag behind, changing more slowly as new experiences derived from reflective responses can counterbalance previous life experiences. An exception to this would be a major traumatic experience, such as being fired or divorced, which may be so powerful an experience that it has an immediate influence on a person's spontaneous behavior.

<u>Predicting and Influencing Behavior</u>

There are three possible predictions a manager can make regarding spontaneous and reflective behavior:

1. Spontaneous behavior derived from personal attributes is predicted to be at least acceptably in line with organizational objectives.
2. Reflective behavior derived from expectations and/or self-concept is predicted to be at least acceptably in line with organizational objectives.
3. Neither is predicted to be acceptable in terms of organizational objectives or a more desirable outcome is thought to be feasible through renegotiation of new or revised expectations.

Based on the above predictions there are six general kinds of influence strategies a manager might choose:

1. Influence an individual to be reflective in accordance with existing expectations when reflective behavior derived from expectations is predicted to be acceptably in line with organizational goals and objectives. One way this may be achieved is to interact with the individual when he/she is NOT busy and discuss expectations first.

2. Influence an individual to be reflective in accordance with that person's self-concept when that reflective behavior derived from that person's self-concept is predicted to be acceptably in line with organizational goals and objectives. One way this may be achieved is to interact with the individual when he/she is NOT busy and discuss career, ethical or legal issues first.
3. Influence an individual to be spontaneous when that behavior is predicted to be at least acceptably in line with organizational goals and objectives. One way this may be achieved is to interact with the individual when he/she is very busy and under time pressure.
4. Renegotiate expectations and then influence the individual to be reflective in accordance with the new expectations. This influence can be facilitated by interacting positively as coach or mentor to reinforce the new expectations and thus enhance the probability of the desired reflective behavior.
5. Over a longer period, initiate management development, career development, coaching or other programs to encourage the individual or groups of individuals to reevaluate their self-concepts.
6. Also over a long period, provide positive feedback on desirable reflective behavior thus creating life experiences which have the effect of positive reinforcement (Skinner, op.cit.) until this behavior becomes spontaneous.

Executives can choose one or a combination of these strategies and control their own actions in conformity with them to maximize the probability that an individual will behave in the desired way during the manager's interaction on a specific issue.

<u>Examples</u>

Managers can use these strategies in many different situations. Four examples of executives predicting behavior and choosing a strategy to influence it are: Joe Reed, a sales situation, an organizational unit, and peer group meetings.

Joe Reed

Vice president Dan Stone used a combination strategy based on #1 and #4 and behaved accordingly in the "Joe Reed" case to influence Joe to reassess reflectively a situation in which Joe had already behaved spontaneously. As a result, Joe changed his decision. A

Sales Situation:

Executives who leave a people oriented company often fall into one of two categories. The first category is long time, successful employees fully imbued with the culture and having strong affiliation ties with others in the organization, who are offered outside employment that is "too attractive to turn down". The second category is employees with less time and success in the organization who feel they have not received the recognition or advancement due them, are disgruntled and seek outside employment "to better themselves". In both categories, the new employer expects the new executives to make decisions that are in the best interests of their new organization and not based on positive or negative biases toward their previous employer. If these new executives make a decision to buy products manufactured by their previous employer when they are spontaneous, the first group would tend to buy from their previous employer and the second would tend to buy from someone other than their previous employer. Both would rationalize their decision to convince themselves and their new employer that they have made the best decision (and a good salesperson will provide that rationalization). Therefore, a salesperson from the previous employer's organization will have a higher probability of a sale if he or she is able to meet an executive from the first category when that executive is spontaneous (strategy #3) and with those from the second category when they are reflective (strategy #1), while for salespersons not from the previous employer's organization it is reversed. Effective salespeople recognize this, sometimes intuitively, and develop influence strategies that include appointments when the individual is very busy and likely to be spontaneous or conversely when the individual is likely to have time and inclination to be reflective.

An Organizational Unit

Executives can influence large groups of subordinates to improve total performance by taking actions directed at each of the three influences (strategies #4, #5 and #6). A striking example of this occurred when a new general manager took over a manufacturing operation with instructions to "straighten it out or shut it down". After several months on the job, the new general manager concluded that many subordinate managers (approximately one hundred) were reacting in negative, self-fulfilling ways to most situations. They felt corporate management expected them to be second rate, neither understood nor cared about their contributions, and had sent in a new manager to put them out of work.

The new general manager chose to influence both spontaneous and reflective behavior by addressing each of the three sets of influences. With respect to expectations (strategy #4), he set new but reasonable and attainable goals and objectives, both with groups and individuals, and negotiated high but realistic expectations for the achievement of those goals and objectives. He "managed by walking around" to help his people stay reflective to the maximum extent, reinforce his expectations, and offer encouragement.

To raise their self-concept and skill levels, he established a management development/team building program for all his managers, including himself (strategy #5). He also established a career development program that required his managers to think and write about their own future development opportunities and career alternatives, as well as those of their subordinates. This required an examination of career goals and objectives, and thus the managers' self-concepts. A manager for career development reporting directly to the new general manager was appointed to enhance the process and insure top level involvement. This provided further effort designed to encourage managers to be reflective.

To address personal attributes, he posted targets and achievements wherever reasonable throughout the plant for small work groups, departments and the plant as a whole to provide positive feedback and reinforcing experiences (strategy #6). He implemented a system of rewards for individuals and groups for a wide range of desired behaviors as another means of providing positive success experiences.

Thus, he was positively affecting expectations, self-concepts and personal attributes leading to improvements in both reflective and spontaneous behaviors. The results were swift and substantial. The plant turned around in less than a year and within three years had become one of the top performers in the company.

Peer Group Meetings

Executives can influence peer relationships as was done at the Naval Air Development Center[23]. After a series of senior management meetings on alternatives to improve the current organizational structure and performance, top management designated a group of executives (who reported directly to top management) to develop a proposed new structure or "straw man" to provide a basis for further discussions at future management meetings. Each of the appointed executives agreed with the desirability of improving the structure and performance including improved coordination, communication and resource allocation and had self-concepts of being able to achieve this. In retrospect, these managers apparently viewed their organization as a diamond in the rough and were determined to make it outstanding.[24] At the same time, each of the appointed executives were highly competitive, parochial, jealous of their "turf" and were behaving spontaneously in a defensive manner, as if in win-lose situations. The chairman of the group, a peer of the others, quickly observed the spontaneous behavior of group members in their tendency to squabble and blame each other for a wide range of past performances.

The chairman concluded that so long as the group remained spontaneous, little would get done. Therefore, he decided to maximize reflective behavior (strategy #2). He opened each meeting with a restatement of the goals and objectives that each member of the group accepted as within his competence to achieve. During the meeting, he frequently intervened to ask how a particular point being discussed contributed to the goals and objectives of the group. A facilitator was added to the group to assist the chairman and the group in maintaining a reflective approach to their work. The level of dysfunctional spontaneous behavior declined sharply and the group was able to put forth a proposed new structure in a few weeks. This was accepted with only minor modifications at a subsequent senior management meeting, and later implemented.

SOLUTION

<u>What Executives Can Do</u>

It is critical to remember that people are NOT puppets to be manipulated. What executives CAN do is manipulate their own behavior in the hope of enhancing the probability of positively influencing another person. To the extent that these efforts have greater positive effects than other efforts, they are worth using. But, there are NO panaceas! Executives must be realistic and recognize that of course, they cannot know or influence, let alone control, all the factors that may lead people to behave in ways that are not completely congruent with organizational goals and objectives (e. g. executives can not change someone's personality). But executives can learn to think more carefully about and manage more effectively the margins they do have. For example, executives can renegotiate expectations and thus influence reflective behavior in a relatively short time and over longer periods executives can establish individual or group development programs to encourage higher self-concepts and can reward, or positively reinforce, desirable behavior thus providing a series of success experiences to influence personal attributes. By understanding and using these concepts managers can improve their ability to anticipate reflective and spontaneous behavior more accurately by predicting probable responses of individuals, groups or organizational units to the various actions an executive might take. Thus, they can choose one or several of the six general strategies to enhance the probability of positively influencing individuals, groups or organizational units in achieving organizational goals and objectives.

Executives can predict probable reflective responses of people if they understand the expectations influencing those people. Negotiating and periodically renegotiating expectations gives the manager an improved ability to predict how people will respond when they are reflective and controlling their actions to conform to those expectations. Similarly, managers can improve their ability to predict probable reflective responses derived from the individual's self-concept, including belief system. Managers can deduce the more significant influences by listening to what the individual may say directly or indirectly, to them or to others which may give clues to his or her belief system including goals, objectives, norms, ethics and values and from observation and analysis of the individual's responses when changing relationships, discussing career objectives or facing potentially traumatic situations involving ethical or legal issues. From these deductions, managers can infer the probable reflective responses when the individual's self-concept influences are dominant.

To predict probable spontaneous responses an executive can use integrative and intuitive thought processes, melding previous observations of the spontaneous responses of other people with knowledge of their background and a "feel" for their personalities (Keirsey & Bates Op. Cit). Many people oriented, effective executives regularly, without apparent thought or effort, predict probable spontaneous responses of those around them whom they know well, as in the examples given above. Other executives have acquired an ability to predict spontaneous responses of others after short periods of listening and observing them when they are spontaneous and then deducing at least some of their personal attributes (Kotter's diversity, op. cit.). Again, executives need to listen carefully to what the individual may say directly or indirectly to them or to others that may indicate personality or personal history such as previous experiences, cultural factors, or education. For example, a naval officer with twenty-five years of operational service may have had so many experiences in that hierarchical and often autocratic environment that he tends to spontaneously behave that way himself, that is subconsciously behave as his role models, particularly when under stress. He may spontaneously behave this way even when his self-concept yields reflective behavior that is sensitive and participative. Regardless of what level of people skill an executive has acquired, he or she can learn to predict probable spontaneous responses better by trusting and accepting his or her own intuitive judgment (Hayashi, et al, op. cit.) and focusing whatever sensitivity and understanding he or she has in that direction. This is what Dan Stone did with Joe Reed.

The executive must remember, however, that this is a form of stereotyping which will always result in some degree of error. As time passes, executives should expect to refine their ability to predict as more data about an individual becomes available. This refinement is necessary not only because of inevitable stereotyping errors, but because more life experiences are occurring to everyone every day and both the executive and the other person will be different people with expanded life experiences as time goes on. Once managers understand these sets of influences and focus on them, they can predict the probable spontaneous and reflective response of other individuals to each of the alternative actions that the managers may take. They are then able to evaluate which responses are at least acceptably in line with organizational goals and objectives and choose a strategy or combination of strategies to interact in a manner and at a time when the desired responses are most likely. For example: the more time pressure (very busy) or stress a person is under the more likely he or she is to be spontaneous; conversely, the more pensive a person is, and the lower the felt time pressures, the more likely he or she is to be reflective. It should be noted that managers are usually under time pressure themselves and may not be able to take the time to understand an individual when a problem situation arises. To use these concepts effectively, managers should apply whatever people skills they have to understand those around them before problems develop.

Of course, executives can spend whatever time they choose on developing and/or refining their ability to predict probable reflective and spontaneous responses before problems arise, but predicting spontaneous behavior is usually more difficult and more time consuming. For particularly important or difficult individuals (e. g., a senior manager or a very complex peer or subordinate upon whom the executive may be critically dependent for the achievement of organizational objectives), more time may be justified. If so, the executive can gather background data on a particular person from company announcements, records or other sources. Then he or she might choose a quiet period such as "down time" on an extended business trip with the other person to reminisce about his or her own past, including education, previous work experience, family, etc. This often elicits similar information from the other person. Executives can also use their skill as observers to determine when another person is spontaneous (e.g. under some kind of time pressure or stress), and then observe both the actions and the context of the situation in which the actions occur. It is often useful to write down these observations as an objective journalist might, including the background data collected and the observed reactions or responses of others. Only after completing the objective observations does the executive step back and begin his or her analysis. This analysis focuses on deducing those personal attributes such as perceptions, assumptions being made, motivations, problem solving decision styles, biases, and personality which help explain what was observed. Some executives in both private and government organizations, e. g., members of the U.S. Senior Executive Service, have learned about the Myers-Briggs character and temperament types (op. cit.). With this understanding, the executive can deduce which type he or she is observing and his or her ability to predict may be substantially enhanced thereby. By reiterating this observation/analysis process, the executive can become more proficient in understanding and predicting probable spontaneous responses.

Many people respond to certain words or phrases that "flip" them from spontaneous to reflective behavior or vice versa. For example, many people become spontaneous when the word "taxes" is mentioned. In like manner, many people become reflective when the phrase "what are the legal and ethical implications of this proposal" is used, or when expectations are brought up for renegotiation or discussion. The impact of these words and phrases derives from each person's life experiences. Hence, different words or phrases may be necessary for different people and, indeed, the same word or phrase may have opposite effects on different people. For example, use of the word "audit" leads many executives to be spontaneous, but many accountants to be reflective. Executives must determine which words or phrases have the desired effect for each person they wish to influence. The executive may then incorporate use of these words as part of his or her strategy of optimizing the probability of either spontaneous or reflective responses.

Beyond this, executives need to know what to do if neither the predicted reflective nor spontaneous response is acceptable in terms of organizational goals, or if they face a situation involving people new to the organization or people they have not yet been able to understand. For example, if an executive wishes to influence a person or group to improve performance beyond what is currently expected, the set of expectations in their relationship must be renegotiated, as in the plant manager example given earlier, to make the necessary modifications concerning performance, and then the executive needs to coach that person or group so as to maximize the probability that they will be reflective in ways that are consistent with the new expectations. Over time, the behavior derived from the new expectations provides new life experiences which influence spontaneous responses which may become habitual as in the Marine colonel example given earlier.

It should be noted, however, that the response being solicited must be in the best interest of the organization as it was in all the examples in this chapter. When the response elicited is later perceived to be only in the self-interest of the influencing individual, then the process is viewed as manipulative and may have a negative or destructive impact on the relationship. Conversely, when the response is in the best interest of the organization, no one views the process as manipulative. Rather, the influencing individual is seen as being sensitive to the needs and feelings of the other person or group. People do not object to the process when they look good as a result. In the "Joe Reed" case, Joe is not likely to resent Dan Stone's intervention because Joe made a better decision and "looks good" as a result.

SUMMARY

Human behavior is very complex indeed and the approach described in this chapter is not a panacea. It is one tool that executives can learn to use to better predict and influence the actions of others. This may lead to the development of more effective working relationships in the organization, and for some executives and organizations, the results have been dramatic.

Executives can improve their ability to influence the key people around them, including their senior managers, peers and subordinates, by:

1. developing an understanding of spontaneous and reflective behaviors that derive from expectations, self-concepts and personal attributes;
2. developing clear, explicit sets of expectations with other people and listening carefully to expectations other people express, not only with respect to the executive but also with respect to all other relationships they have;
3. understanding other people's self-concepts by deduction based on listening for clues to their belief system during career discussions as well as observation and analysis of

their responses to changing relationships or potentially traumatic situations involving ethical or legal issues;

4. understanding other people's spontaneous responses intuitively by focusing on them, by observing people in situations where they are clearly being spontaneous, by knowing or learning about their personality and background, and by deducing those personal attributes that explain what is observed;
5. from the above understanding, being better able to predict probable spontaneous and reflective responses of other people to the various actions the executive might take;
6. determining which of the predicted responses is likely to be most in line with organizational goals and objectives; and
7. choosing a strategy, including the time and method of interacting, to enhance the probability that the behavior derived from that interaction, either reflective or spontaneous, is the one most likely to yield the best response in terms of organizational goals and objectives or renegotiating expectations and through coaching enhance the probability of reflective responses.

Questions for Reflection and/or Discussion

1. What are the differences and similarities between expectations, self-concept and personal attributes or characteristics?

2. How can someone tell when another person is behaving reflectively or spontaneously?

3. What can managers do to enhance the probability of positively influencing another person?

4. What potential problems might there be when a manager tries to influence another person?

FOOTNOTES

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