CE Center for Effective Organizations

Executive Behavior in High Involvement Organizations

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The increasing popularity of participative management has led to an extensive literature on it. This literature typically makes the case that increased use of participative management can improve international competitiveness and offer a competitive advantage to many firms. This seems to be particularly true in the case of high technology companies that face stiff international competition. Companies like Motorola, Sun Microsystems, Compaq Computer and Digital Equipment are often cited as premiere examples of organizations that use participative management throughout their operations. Along with the increasing adoption of participative management has come an extensive literature on how to make it work. Books on high involvement management, high performance work systems, and participative leadership tend to focus extensively on the lower levels of the organization and specify in some detail how work should be structured, how people should be paid, and how supervisors should behave.

Missing in most discussions of participative management is a clear view of what must happen at the upper levels of management in order for it to provide a competitive advantage. There is a literature showing that traditional supervisors often have trouble adapting to a participative management style. This literature typically goes on to describe how lower level managers should behave in order to be effective in a participative or high involvement work setting (e.g., Walton and Schlesinger, 1979). Much less is written about the role of senior management. There is, however, a growing literature on the role of leaders in organizations (e.g., Bennis and Nanus, 1986; Tichy and Devanna, 1986). This literature is, of course, relevant to high involvement organizations since they, more than most organizations, need leadership that provides a sense of purpose, vision, direction and empowerment.

This paper is not about leadership per se, however, it is about how senior managers in organizations should structure and carry out their jobs in order to be consistent with a high involvement approach to management. Demonstrating certain leadership behaviors certainly is a part of this, but only one part. There are also structural, reward system and other parts of the job that need to be done in a particular way if a participatively managed organization is to be effective. As more and more organizations are managed in a high involvement manner the roles of executives and senior managers will undoubtedly come into even clearer focus. At the present time knowledge is limited because so few senior managers have managed a high involvement organization. Little effort has been spent on working out the kind of behaviors and support structures which are necessary at the executive level in order to make a high involvement organization so effective that it provides a competitive advantage. Nevertheless some things can be said based upon our knowledge of organizations and the experience of a limited number of organizations.

Direction Setting

There is one function that must be led from the top of the organization. It is the unique responsibility of senior management to set the overall direction for the organization (Burns, 1978; DePree, 1987). This issue has little to do with how an organization is going to operate; but much to do with what an organization is trying to accomplish and in what direction it is heading. It involves decisions about which mountain the organization is going to try to climb or, even more broadly, the decision that the organization is in the business of mountain climbing rather than in the business of underwater exploration.

In a high involvement or participative organization it is up to the senior levels of management to lead the decision process in this area and to be sure that there is a consensus in the organization about the direction that the business is heading (Nadler, 1989). This does not mean, however, that this decision has to be made in a unilateral top down manner. It does not have to be made, for example, by a few senior executives going off to a retreat and coming back with a statement of objectives or purpose for the business. Nor does it have to be made by a single executive who has an inspiration about the business and its direction. Input can and should be sought from a number of levels of the organization and ideas tested throughout the organization once they have been initially proposed. It is an ideal place for the organization to use task forces and form study groups. It is easier to get acceptance of an idea when the development process has been a participative one. It is also important to add that a participative development process can reinforce the overall commitment of the organization to participative management.

Often the strategic direction of an organization is best captured in a written document. There are a number of successful examples of this, particularly in such large organizations as Johnson & Johnson, Ford Motor Company, and the 3M Corporation, and smaller ones such as Herman Miller. The role of the senior executive should be to have everyone in the company understand the objectives of organization and embrace them as a guiding focus of the entire organization. The best statements tell people the right things to do in their jobs, how to behave toward one another and how to behave toward customers, suppliers and others. Establishing such statements is clearly a difficult process and is where leadership skills as well as managerial skills are very important.

Once the strategic direction of an organization has been set, senior management has the responsibility to keep it in the forefront of the organization's consciousness. They are the only ones in the organization that can bring it to life and keep it as an important piece of the organization's culture. There are no prescribed formulas for doing this but it is clear that in some organizations, certain kinds of activities have helped. For example, meetings of the right kind can help. Similarly, certain kinds of publications and other symbolic activities in the organization can highlight the direction that the organization is taking. Symbolic events can be things all the way from senior executives meeting all new employees to tell them what the goals of the organization are to employees meeting with customers and suppliers to discuss quality. Indeed, TV advertising and other forms of media attention can help capture and communicate the strategic direction. Ford has done this very nicely with their advertising efforts in the area of quality while SAS airlines has done it with their customer service oriented advertising.

As part of the focus on strategic direction, senior management needs to develop certain feedback mechanisms in the organization that help everyone be aware of the type of progress the organization is making. One process that can be particularly useful here is competitive benchmarking. Xerox, for example, has used this process very skillfully to both identify what the organization is striving to achieve and to give the organization ongoing feedback about how well it is doing. It is critical for senior management to put into place some mechanism to assure that individuals throughout the organization get a sense of how they are doing competitively and whether in fact they are meeting the strategic agenda of the organization.

Structure at Senior Management Level

Most models of organizational design stress congruence and fit (Galbraith, 1977). In essence, the argument is that there is no one right set of practices for an organization but there are practices which tend to fit and reinforce each other. The key to organizational effectiveness, therefore, is having an organization in which the different pieces fit together and support each other and of course also fit the strategy. This has some interesting implications for the kind of organizational structure which should exist at the senior management level in a participative organization.

Perhaps the best place to start discussing structure at the top is with the highest level of the organization, the board of directors. Typically, boards of U.S. companies have been made up of senior managers and some outside board members. Boards need to be structured quite differently, however, in the case of the high involvement organization.

As with traditional organizations, one issue is the degree to which the board is dominated by internal members versus external members. The argument for having outside board members, who are more than tokens, is particularly compelling in the case of high involvement management. They should be powerful enough, both in numbers and stature to check any tendencies on the part of executives to act arbitrarily or unilaterally on issues that directly affect employees and, of course, issues that are in the self-interest of senior managers (e.g., pay). More than in traditional organizations, it is also important that they be experts in management, and have the ability to help the organization benchmark itself against the outside world in terms of its managerial effectiveness.

Perhaps the most important issue in high involvement organizations is the presence on the board of lower level employees. They have a significant stake in the success of the organization and thus, would seem to warrant a position on the board. It is also consistent with the general philosophy of high involvement organizations that information, power, knowledge and rewards should move to the lower levels in the organization. Clearly, one way to do this is to have lower level employees represented on the board. In large organizations this may be more symbolic than practical in the sense of giving non- management employees, as a whole, a chance to participate directly in the decision making, but, nevertheless, they can at least be assured that someone is there speaking for them. In short, it can be a kind of representative democracy.

The idea of lower level members being on boards is far from a new one. It has been practiced in Europe for a considerable period of time and by a few U.S. corporations. In the U.S. it has been done by companies such as Chrysler which have been in financial trouble and needed union support for restructuring, and by some ESOP companies which because of employee ownership have employee representation on the board. However, it has not become an accepted practice in the United States. The reason for this, undoubtedly, is that it is inconsistent with the way most American companies have been managed. Since they have been managed in a top-down manner it is hardly surprising that they regard the idea of employee representation on boards as not being particularly appropriate.

There has been some experimentation in the United States with the idea of a Junior Board. Typically, junior boards have been made up of promising managers who have not yet reached the executive level. They look at many of the same issues as the board of directors and, in many cases, provide input to the board for use in their final decision making. In most cases this idea has been used in association with management development program, rather than as a participative management vehicle. It may be appropriate at this point to use it as an approach to getting employees throughout the organization more involved in the major decisions that are made in an organization. It represents a potentially powerful way to move new kinds of information, power and knowledge downward in the organization. Like employee membership on the board, it is limited in the number of individuals that are directly effected but, nevertheless, it can be an important symbolic and practical way of involving a broader range of individuals in the decision making processes of the organization.

A second important structural issue concerns the reporting relationship of the senior human resource executive. Although precise figures are not available, a good estimate is that in as many as fifty percent of U.S. corporations the senior human resource executive reports to an executive one or two levels below the chief executive office. This kind of reporting relationship is highly inconsistent with an organization model which stresses high involvement management. Indeed, it suggests that other features of an organization are more important to its success than are its human resources. This is directly contrary to the statements which are typically made by high involvement organizations which say such things as "people are our most important asset" and "we are committed to the growth of our human resources."

Although this issue is partly symbolic, there is also a practical side to it. If a human resources executive is not in the senior management decision making process, it is less likely that human resource issues will be considered. This in turn will make it less likely that the organization's actions will align themselves with a focus on high involvement management.

The whole issue of the reporting relationship of the human resources function leads to the issue of how the rest of the senior management team should be structured. One intriguing possibility here is the idea of structuring it as a work team (Nadler, 1989). The literature on employee involvement is full of cases on the success of self managing work teams in production and service areas (Lawler, 1986). A great deal is known about how to structure them and manage them at the lower levels. Virtually absent is any writing discussing work teams at the senior management level. There may be a good reason for this: they simply don't fit the kind of work that needs to be done at senior management levels. But before we conclude that they are entirely inappropriate at this level, some experimentation would seem to be worthwhile.

Some organizations have adopted structures that include an office of the president which has two or three members and operates on a limited work team model. It may not be too difficult to extend this to a somewhat larger group that in fact covers the major functions of the corporation. Clearly, with the level of technical specialization that is required in some areas of senior management responsibility, some individuals must take primary responsibility for specific areas, but a more flexible deployment of people may be possible here. For example, individuals who have come up to senior management through cross functional rotation programs should be able to operate in more than one functional area. This could lead to a senior management group where individuals take responsibility for projects as well as functional areas. The projects could cover multiple functional areas, and indeed, it could lead to executives taking supervisory responsibility for more than one function and to them sharing responsibility for functions. One of the major advantages of this approach could be to crate a senior management group that is familiar with the total functioning of the organization and.
that is a much better decision making body when issues come to it involving functional competition and differences. It also could help the group make better decisions when issues involve several lines of business.

One more structural issue needs to be considered in any discussion of high involvement management, the use of task forces. Task forces which include individuals from multiple levels in the organization, particularly lower level, are a powerful way to move new kinds of information and knowledge downward in the organization. They can be used to address many of the decisions that need to be made in an organization. Depending upon the issue, they can be either given the power to make a final decision, or just to make a recommendation to senior management. They can be effective in a number of areas but one place where they seem to be particularly appropriate is in developing such human resource management programs as career development structures, pay systems, and training programs. They also can be quite useful in doing organization design work and deciding on certain types of new capital investments. These are all situations where individuals have knowledge through their work in lower levels jobs. Participating on task forces is a way not only for the organization to utilize this knowledge, but to get improved decision making and broader input into decisions.

Structure at Lower Organizational Levels

Senior management is uniquely responsible for the overall structure of an organization. They, for example, are in the position to lead the decision process which creates an organization that is structured around products, services, customers or functions. The use of high involvement management has strong implications for a particular kind of structure which is appropriate for an organization. Specifically, high involvement management needs an organizational structure which allows people at the lower levels to have a customer/supplier relationship so that they can get feedback and be held accountable for the delivery of a product or service (Lawler, 1986). The implication for senior management is clear. They need to be sure that the organization is structured in ways that allow employees throughout the organization to have a customer/supplier relationship. In most cases this means the overall structure of the organization should be based on a customer, product, or service focus (Galbraith, 1977).

The success of high involvement management also depends on having a relatively flat organizational structure. If many levels of management are present, it is virtually impossible to move power, information, and knowledge to the lower levels in the organization. In essence, power gets picked off by each level of management so that by the time it gets to the lower levels there are very few decisions available for the lowest level individuals to make. Related to the issue of flatness is the role of the staff organization. Moving decision making power to lower levels requires not only a lean staff, but that the staff organization see their role as facilitating and supporting decision making by the line organization. Staff organizations are likely to adopt this role only if senior management keeps the staff group small and provides them with direction which is consistent with it.

Participative Behavior

Much of the writing on participative management emphasizes that senior managers need to role model the kind of behavior that they expect to see demonstrated at the lower levels of the organization. The argument generally says that role modeling the behavior will help provide people at the lower levels of the organization with an example, and help establish a climate and culture in which this behavior it seen as acceptable and, even demanded (DePree, 1987). It is hard to argue with this point-of- view, but we need to go one step further and talk about some of the kinds of behavior that is appropriate at the senior levels of management.

One of the most visible things that senior management does is hold meetings and convene groups. How these are run can be an important symbol of the type of information exchange and decision making processes which exist at the senior management level (Peters, 1978). For example, in a traditional organization, staff meetings frequently are sessions in which individuals make long formal reports on what is going on in their area, the purpose being basic information exchange. Little discussion typically takes place except for a few questions and the meetings are run by the senior executive present in a rather top-down "efficient" manner. Organizations, such as Xerox, which have moved to more participative management styles, have made a significant effort to alter the type of activities which take place in these meetings. For example, they have tried to incorporate many of the principles of good group decision making process into their meetings. Instead of focusing the meeting on information exchange, they have used them for decision making purposes and have, in fact, trained the executives in good group process and decision making techniques. In addition, they have tried to break the highly formal presentation mode by using flip charts, discussions, and encouraging individuals to disagree with positions.

One last point about modeling participative decision making at the top levels of an organization. Often the decision process at the top is the critical event in determining whether people throughout the organization see a participative management approach as sincere. Particularly important is how the most important organizational decisions are made. Often these decisions concern capital expenditures and budgeting. If these decisions are made in a traditional top-down manner, then the organization is likely to get the impression that employee involvement is O.K. for trivial decisions but not for the most important decisions. Senior management, therefore, needs to take a careful look at how these decisions are made and be sure to give lower levels an opportunity to influence the capital expenditure and budgetary decisions for their particular work unit or work area.

In a high involvement organization it is unlikely that all decisions should or can be made in a highly participative manner. Indeed, one of the most important kinds of decisions that a senior manager needs to make concerns which type of decision style to use (Vroom and Yetton, 1973). Admittedly, consistency with a high involvement model argues that, in many cases, the decision style chosen should be a participative one. But in cases where time is of the essence, or information uniquely rests at the top, a participative decision process may not be the best way to go. In such cases, it is important that the senior executive explain that a non-participative decision making approach will be used and explain why it will be used. Even the most ardent advocates of participative decision making recognize that decision making styles need to change depending upon the type of problem being addressed and the situation in which the organization finds itself. What differentiates top-down management from participative management, is that top down management does not require an explanation or reason for going to a traditional autocratic decision style, while the high involvement or participative management style does. Clearly, the best place to start modeling this behavior is with senior managers.

Another managerial behavior that needs to be modeled at the top concerns seeking feedback about managerial effectiveness. Critical to the high involvement approach to management is the willingness on the part of managers to seek information about how effective they are in their decision making and in their leadership behaviors (Argyris and Schon, 1978). At the lower levels in many organizations information can be obtained through attitude surveys and other approaches. This information can then be given to the manager so that he or she gets feedback about how effective they are as a manager. It is always hard for supervisors to ask for feedback because of the risk involved. Further it is often difficult for a subordinate to give valid feedback because they, too, perceive a risk. If feedback is going to occur in an organization, it is best done first and foremost by senior managers asking their subordinates about the way they react to the leadership of senior management. This is an area where senior management can take a dramatic step forward by modeling the kind of behaviors that are needed throughout the organization.

Senior management also is in a particularly good position to share organizational results throughout the organization. They are in the best position to talk about overall operating profits, goals and performance. Because an important part of high involvement management is the sharing of information about financial results, it is critical that senior managers do this type of communicating. There are a number of ways this can be done including informal discussions with employees, interactive video sessions that cover an entire organization and, of course, large meetings with groups of employees invited to hear reports about the organization and it's performance. In most organizations, multiple methods are probably appropriate and need to be carried out on a regular basis. Indeed, it is hard to imagine too much downward communication taking place with respect to operating performance and results.

Precisely, because an important part of every participatively managed organization is the knowledge base of the employees, executives need to be particularly concerned about the kind of training that is available in the organization. This concern needs to extend beyond simply being assured that the organization has in place good training opportunities for individuals. Executives need to look at their own behavior and ask whether they are modeling the kind of learning behavior that they expect to see people at lower levels demonstrate.

A good way for managers to be assured that they are in fact supporting the kind of training that is needed is for them to develop an organization policy that supports everyone having at least a week of training per year and of course for them to make the policy applicable to themselves. IBM is a good example of an organization that has done just this for decades. In addition, they should be the first ones to experience any training programs that focus on leadership style, decision processes, and the development of participative management behaviors. They in turn should participate in these training programs when they are given to their direct subordinates. This kind of cascading process can be extremely valuable in reinforcing throughout the organization the importance of managerial behaviors. Xerox, to mention just one organization, has done an excellent job of developing training approaches which in fact give superiors a key part in developing and supporting participative behaviors from the top to the bottom of the organization. In some other organizations, for example, General Electric, senior executives attend management training programs at all levels in order to both reinforce the type of cultures they want and to sense how the organization is performing.

Finally, Nadler (1989) has pointed out that mundane behavior, by executives, as well as "grand gestures" can be important in shaping organizational behavior. He lists the following as behaviors that can have a great impact:

- Allocation of time and calendar management
- Shaping of physical settings
- Control over agendas of events or meetings
- Use of events such as lunches, meetings, etc.
- Summarization--post hoc interpretation of what occurred
- Use of humor, stories, and myths
- Small symbolic actions, including rewards and punishments

To this list I would add:

- The type of questions asked in meetings and tours of company facilities
- Rejection of status symbols and signs of hierarchical difference.

These are all things an executive can do to signify what's important and what type of behavior is expected in the organization. Used skillfully, these can strongly support the effective practice of high involvement management.

Monitor Decision Processes

In participative organizations a number of decisions are made at lower levels. Because of this, individuals and senior management often have to accept and take responsibility for decisions that they don't directly influence. Doing this involves trusting the individuals and the decision processes at the lower levels in the organization. Indeed, one of the "stressful" things about operating in a participative decision mode is that individuals often are held accountable for decisions that they have not directly made. The emphasis here is on directly because senior managers do have an opportunity to influence how all decisions are made in a participative organization just as they do in a traditional one. They have the chance to influence them because they are responsible for the kind of decision making processes which exist in the organization. Indeed, one of their most important tasks in an organization should be to monitor the kinds of decision processes which go on throughout the organization. They need to systematically gather data about how effectively the organization is operating at levels considerably below them.

There are a number of techniques or approaches that senior managers can use to learn about how their organization is operating. In addition to the normal financial and quality data which are available to senior managers, they can use formal opinion surveys and sensing sessions throughout the organization. These are clearly the minimum that the senior management group should use to keep in touch with how the organization is operating. Beyond this, in certain organizations, effective use can be made of the senior managers actually doing lower level jobs in the organization. Organizations like Federal Express have used this approach quite effectively for decades. In Federal Express, for example, senior executives are expected to do a non-management service job in the organization on a regular basis. This gives executives a unique opportunity to see how the organization is working at a different level and gives them a customer contact experience that can help them to see how the organization is actually operating. In many ways this approach is vastly superior to the idea of wandering around the organization and sensing how people are feeling by watching them and having casual conversations with them (Peters and Waterman, 1982). The wandering around approach runs the risk of being superficial and, in some ways, a condescending interruption of important work. Actually getting out and doing work demonstrates to employees that everyone in the organization is willing to participate in the production area of an organization and can give senior managers a much more intensive experience in how the organization actually operates.

In the case of some decisions, senior managers need to go beyond just listening to the recommendations that come from lower levels in the organization. They need to personally check on how the decision was made and to ask the various decision makers how they feel about the decision process. Executives need to be sure that the affected individuals are given the opportunity to participate in decisions where their expertise is relevant. Again, senior management is in the best position to test the decision processes and be sure that they are operating effectively. Only if they do this can they or should they trust and fully commit themselves to the kinds of decisions that come out of the lower levels of the organization.

Very relevant to the issue of decision processes at the lower levels of the organization is the issue of access. Senior managers need to be perceived as accessible to individuals at the lower levels of the organization. Access can be through a number of vehicles including a formal appeal process which allows individuals who feel they have not been heard in the decision process or been unfairly treated to directly raise this issue with senior management. In a number of organizations, such as IBM, this practice has been used for years and has allowed the organization to resolve a number of grievances short of a lawsuit or union grievance.

Access needs to go beyond just the formal appeal process. Senior managers working in lower level jobs can help, as can eating in a dining room with other employees. Even the arranging of office space in such a way that casual and informal contact occurs with people throughout the organization can help. The specific ways that access can be created must differ from organization to organization. The overall point, however, remains that senior managers need to be sure that they are accessible through both formal and informal communication channels.

Reward System

Senior executives are in a particularly good position to design and influence the reward systems of their organizations. Rewards such as pay increases, promotion and recognition are an important element in the motivation and control systems of organizations (Lawler, 1981). Because they are so important, the rewards in an organization need to line up and support participative management if a high involvement organization is to be successful (Lawler, 1986).

Senior management is particularly well positioned to give recognition for outstanding performance. Indeed, from several perspectives, one of the most important things that senior management can do is to identify and reward the kind of organizational performance that contributes to the organization's strategic direction. The rewards need not be of material or financial value, they can simply be of symbolic value. Particularly when senior management is involved, attention is often very rewarding in and of itself. Because senior management has the unique ability to give certain kinds of recognition, it is particularly vital that senior management recognize performance and, in the process, become the role model for the kind of behavior they expect managers lower down in the organization to engage in.

As has already been suggested, senior executives need to be accessible and need to convey a sense that their behavior and their decision processes are consistent with a participative approach. This has strong implications for perquisites. In high involvement organizations extensive perquisites are simply very inappropriate. There is little room for reserved parking spaces, executive dining rooms, and other perquisites that set senior executives apart from the rest of the employees. It is not that perquisites, per se, are bad, rather it is that they simple don't fit with a style of management which stress minimal social distance and behavior patterns which involve a considerable amount of upward communication.

One other feature of high involvement organizations also argues for minimal perquisites and few reward system differences that are tied to organizational level. High involvement management argues that decisions should be made by individuals who have the most knowledge and expertise on that particular issue. Sometimes this is indeed senior management, but sometimes it isn't. When senior managers are separated by symbols that indicate that they are the most powerful and prestigious individuals in the organization, there is a tendency to look to them for all the answers. The difference between high involvement management and traditional management centers on this very key point. Traditional management argues that decisions belong to positions and the key element of any position is its position in the hierarchy. In this model the more important decisions clearly belong to higher level individuals. High involvement management argues that decisions ought to go where the expertise is and this may or may not relate to the hierarchy. Thus, status symbols and hierarchical reward structures ought to be minimal to non-existent so that they don't guide decisions to the top of the organization.

Perhaps the greatest impact that senior management can have on the degree to which high involvement management is practiced throughout the organization comes through the promotion and pay systems. Organizations that promote managers who practice participative management tend to develop participative managers throughout the organization. Organizations which preach the importance of participative management and then disregard it in promotion and pay decisions tend not to elicit participative behaviors from managers. If senior management wants to strongly encourage participative management, it needs to ask questions and demand that data be gathered about how managers behave throughout the organization. These data, in turn, need to be an important part of decisions concerning promotion and pay changes. Data on managerial performance can be obtained from subordinates and by observing the behavior of managers. The important point is that managers throughout the organization must realize that their behavior as a manager has an important influence on their career direction and on their pay increases. Senior management, in particular, needs to reinforce this and provide a clear message that this is the way the organization operates.

Executive Effectiveness

So far our discussion has emphasized a number of areas where senior managers need to be particularly effective if they are to be successful in managing a high involvement organization. We are now ready to look at the issue of how senior executive can tell whether they have been effective in creating a high involvement organization. There clearly are a variety of indicators that senior management can look at. Here, the intention is simply to focus on a few key ones that indicate if an organization is in fact operating in a high involvement manner.

Perhaps the key communication change that an executive should see concerns the upward flow of information. Simply stated, the executive should find much more upward communication taking place, from direct feedback about their own behavior from their subordinates to informal communication from people throughout the organization about how things are going. In the effective high involvement organization, senior levels should feel that they are in touch with what is going on throughout the organization. This should be particularly true with respect to how decisions are made and the overall operation of the organization.

The second area where managers should notice important behaviors if they are managing in a high involvement manner concerns understanding of the business. They should be able to ask people throughout the organization about how the business is performing and get good, informed answers. Further, they should notice a high level of ownership over business results. That is, individuals should feel responsible for how their particular business unit is operating and, indeed, about how the total organization is operating. One of the things that is most noticeable in successful high involvement organizations is the degree to which people at all levels can talk about the condition of business, its cost, its performance, and its customers.

Responsibility for the business should lead to the third element that should be observable. In a high involvement organizations individuals should recognize and reward each other for effective performance. Management alone should not have to be responsible for formally recognizing and acknowledging good performance. Peers should recognize peers and subordinates should recognize bosses for good performance. Effective high involvement organizations need to rely on this as an important method of control and indeed, to a substantial degree, this method of control is critical in replacing the traditional controls that are present in top-down managed organizations. It comes about only when people are committed to the effectiveness of the organization and feel a shared sense of responsibility for the operation of the organization.

Finally, in an effective high involvement organization senior managers should be able to observe that employees have a strong and accurate sense of what the right thing to do is in a particular situation and, of course, the willingness to do it (Carlzon, 1987). They should not, for example, talk about what their job description calls for or "what they are responsible for." Effective high involvement organizations should show a level of responsibility in which individuals worry about what needs to be done in order to make the organization effective. Of course, in an effective organization not only do they need to think about what to do, they need to make good decisions about what the right thing is to do. Again, senior management needs to monitor this aspect of the organization's culture in order to see if it is being effective in implementing and performing its rule as a senior management group.

Overall, the argument is that if senior management performs its role effectively it should be observable in behaviors that appear throughout the organization. Individuals at all levels should take responsibility for the organization's effectiveness and make a strong commitment to the organization's long term performance. In the absence of effective senior management behaviors and structures, this type of organization-wide commitment is hard, if not impossible, to generate. Thus, in a very direct sense, the effectiveness of senior management is ultimately visible in the effectiveness of the organization and can prove to be a competitive advantage for their organizations.

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