

Global Publishing: A Management School in Practical Effectiveness

I have been asked to say a few things this morning about revolutionary effectiveness in publishing. So the title of this talk is "Revolutionary Effectiveness in Publishing," or "A Funny Thing Happened to Me on the Way to University 13 in India." In an age of doing, when implementaries are the key, when the art of transforming mundane activity into destinal engagement is the key to human motivity, there is no better assignment than the print shop. I am absolutely convinced of that.

I want to talk a little bit about my experience with the print shop and my reflections on these experiences, then reflect on some principles of practical effectiveness relative to management. I will do this by looking at four functions and four basic arenas. The functions are: management, production, printing and distribution. The four critical arenas under each function are priority assessment, time control, task assignment, and accountability responsiveness.

New, relative to management, let me first present a principle in each of the critical arenas (I am very much indebted to Drucker here) and then some kind of an image for each principle. Next, I will talk through production, printing and distribution by using some illustrations out of our work in publishing to help put some flesh on those principles.

First of all, relative to priority assessment, to manage effectively concentrate on a few major areas where superior performance will produce outstanding results. The second basic principle of management, relative to time control, to manage effectively, manage the time that you can control. Relative to task assignment, to manage effectively, build on strengths and learn to live with weaknesses. Finally, relative to accountability, to manage effectively focus on the outward contribution, not on the work that needs to be done. Focus on the outward or the external contribution or changes that you are after, not on the work that is sitting on your desk in front of you.

While thinking through what those principles would mean to us there were several images that came to mind. I will share those quickly with you and then give concrete examples in production, printing and distribution. There were three characters that came to mind. How do you talk about a particular principle as an underground revolutionary? I have a lot of favorite images that come from my history there. How would you talk about those particular principles as a bureaucratic cog? Again, I have a lot of favorite images from my history. Finally, how would you talk about those principles as a transestablishment self? Relative to the assessment of priorities, the underground revolutionary always focuses on a symbolic objective. The bureaucratic cog always focuses on a reasonable objective, and the transestablishment self on the contradiction. Relative to managing your time, the underground revolutionary works all night, whether he has to or not. The bureaucratic cog works from nine to five whether he has to or not. And the transestablishment self re-creates his time design to meet the demands of his external situation. Relative to task assignment, the underground revolutionary assigns tasks to "whoever shows up." If nobody shows up, he does them himself. The bureaucratic cog always assigns tasks

to the specialists. If there are no specialists available, the tasks don't get done. The transestablishment self assigns tasks to people who can get the job done and continually trains new people to do those tasks. Finally, relative to accountability, the underground revolutionary shoots the one who messes up. The bureaucratic cog fires the one who messes up. The transestablishment self re-creates the context for the one who messes up.

Now with some of those kinds of images I want to talk about the revolutionary edge in publishing. I was asked to try to get folks excited about publishing, to get them spinning in terms of what we perceive to be an edge in our missional work, to rehearse the history of publishing as we have encountered it, and to come up with some statistics that will just knock you over on your ears. I decided not to do any of those things, but to reflect on what I know out of the past few months. Let's start in the whole arena of priority assessment beginning with the function of production. In each one of these arenas I will state the simple principle of effectiveness and then illustrate it. Relative to the assessment of priorities in production, by operating principle is: Look to what the circuits require. In the situation of having to choose whether or not to commit 150 man-hours to the Lenten printing and 50 man-hours to Sponsorship Guides, or vice versa the operating principle is to look at what the circuits require. The need informs the decision.

Relative to assessment of priorities in printing, my operating principle is: Get the appropriate kind of paper. I was really bowled over a couple of weeks ago when we were talking about the 100,000 workbooks needed on the other side of the 100,000 four-color workbooks that arrive April first. It became clear as we discussed some of the practics that the major bottleneck there was not finding a printer. We can get a printer to do 100,000 without charging anything. It is getting the paper, for no matter how much money you have, ther is not that much paper available. We can not call up a paper supplier on Monday and say, "We need enough paper to print 100,000 sixty-four page workbooks," and expect delivery on Friday. In the first instance, it is not because we are not willing to pay, it is because he does not have paper. It does not exist. He has to go out and make it. He has to cut down some trees in order to get the silly paper. Paper is scarce these days. With the increased volume we are projecting in printing, the bottleneck is paper, not presses or trained personnel. It is getting the appropriate kinds of paper. Not too long ago--you are not going to believe this--the print shop did not have any paper. People were giving us printing requests and we would say, "You are not going to believe this, but the reason we don't have your printing is because we don't have any paper." Somebody said, "Well, why don't you solve that contradiction and get some paper?" So we called up a paper company and had forty boxes of paper delivered to us. It was gone the next day. Unbelievable, isn't it? If you laid all those 8 1/2 X 11 sheets of paper in those forty boxes end-to-end, you would have a paper sidewalk twenty-seven miles long! Our presses used that in less than twenty-four hours. That is the kind of volume we are dealing with.

Now, relative to the function of distribution and the assessment of priorities, my operating principle is: Effectively, if not efficiently,

maintain your critical inventory. We have a favorite ongoing discussion in the print shop. It has to do with the relative effectiveness of machine-collating and hand-collating. We have grounded the principle of effectiveness over efficiency in that particular arena. The machine on the second floor collates 1800 three-page documents or 600 twenty-four page documents per hour and staples them. Now that is assuming that the conditions are right. That we have the right weight paper, that the paper was not stored on its edge, that the humidity is right and that it is printed well with no "garbage pages." One of my colleagues has a saying that goes something like, "It is not reasonable at all to imagine that anyone in this building should ever have to hand-collate a document again." That is operating out of machine efficiency. But what happens in a situation where you have 3500 Town Meeting workbooks to collate in less than twenty-four hours in order to meet a plane deadline and 4000 Sponsor Committee Guides just off the press that need to be collated, boxed and into the UPS system and a colleague running up to your desk needing 500 copies of the Global Order Report and it goes on and on and on?? What happens is that you end up having four people watch the machine collate 300 workbooks per hour while the other stuff sits on tables. Then effectiveness demands that three people hand-collate the documents to get them out in the field where they need to be and let the machine do its thing on the workbooks.

Now I want to talk to you a little bit about time control. For production my operating principle is: If quality is important, give large chunks of time to skilled people. For us, large chunks of time means Week II task forces, Day I task forces and Day III task forces. If you are out to produce a quality document, skilled people who can do that kind of job need to be pulled together and given forty-four hours, a weekend, in which that job is all they have to do or be concerned with. Then the document will get done. If there is a lot of detailed follow-through, assign a task force Day I and a midnight shift from eleven to seven in the morning to get the document done. Then you will get it when you need it. It just does not seem to work if you assign the follow-through to a Day II task force that is working out, who comes in and deals with the corporate symbolic life and then has two-and-one-half working hours every night. They just get started on a task like production, when it is time to quit. Large chunks of time are needed for the people who know what they are doing if you want a quality document.

Relative to printing and time control, my operating principle is: Know when to close your shop. In the past few weeks during Day I, some of you have encountered a time of one to two-and-a-half hours when the telephone was not answered. During that time period we get thirty to fifty messages left at the reception desk. You have also encountered locked doors. Some of you have beat loudly on the doors and made gestures through the windows. What we were doing was sitting down to schedule our presses for a week. The way to get the most out of the printing equipment we have is to create a detailed schedule of the anticipated projects and activities. We have found that we can not do that around the edges while three of us are printing and two of us are trying to collate a document and somebody else is trying to empty the trash. (You want to know how many times a day we empty the trash? We get blocked if we do not empty those barrels once a day; we stand knee-deep in trash by mid-morning and can not get to the presses). Knowing when to shut down so that when you are open you are effective, is key. Scheduling

is one practical application of this principle. Another is machine maintenance. We discovered that most printing companies shut down one workday out of five to do nothing but clean and repair the presses. That was an insight for us. We looked at the chewing gum and all the rubber bands holding those presses together. "Holy cow, you mean we can actually clean those things? Repair them?" We have not implemented that particular principle yet, but we are seriously considering it in terms of the demand that is upon us. We can not afford to have a press break down in the middle of a critical run. Our only insurance is preventive maintenance.

Relative to distribution, my practical principle of managing the time that you can control is: Create leverage that you can use on carriers. Whatever it is that is hauling your materials, create leverage. The only kind of leverage that we have with carriers is the time that we deliver our stuff to them. That is really the only thing we can control. We have not had much luck trying to get American Airlines to alter their flight schedules, or their air freight rates, or the maximum cargo weight per plane. But, the thing that we can control is when our materials arrive in their depot. My illustration for leverage is having workbooks show up at Town Meetings before the meeting begins. Last week we had a typical shipment going to Tulsa. Because we have a little difficulty freighting materials to smaller places (there are fewer flights), we took the shipment to O'Hare Wednesday night in order to ensure arrival time on Friday for the Town Meeting on Saturday. Friday morning we checked with the terminal, and discovered that the Town Meeting boxes were still sitting on the floor in the terminal, and of course, the House Prior was on the phone asking when the boxes would arrive. Our distribution "gun" reached the manager and the conversation went something like this: "Tomorrow there are going to be 300 people at a Town Meeting in that community to celebrate the Bicentennial. They can not have that meeting without those boxes of materials. They are just that critical. We got the boxes to your company on Wednesday night so that it would be in Tulsa by Saturday. Now your company is going to make sure that the material arrives there, isn't it?" We checked back that afternoon. There were two items of cargo that got on that plane, one of which was the Town Meeting materials. Now we had leverage there in that situation because our delivery time was early enough. Relative to distribution, our delivery time is the critical thing. The critical time for delivery of Town Meeting materials is not Friday morning--it is Wednesday night. If we have blown it by Wednesday night--we are in deep, deep trouble.

Now I want to talk through task assignments and the principles of production, printing and distribution. My operating principle for production is: Focus on the imaginal impact. We do not need to worry too much about the particular field of expertise required for immediate production; what we need to worry about is the imaginal content. Let's in-kind all of the artistic lay-out work, whatever it is that we need to get a particular media job done. We have done that on the the Town Meeting workbook and the Town Meeting mailer. It is the image that counts. For the conveying of the image we can get whatever expertise we need in order to get art work and production done. Relative to printing, my practical operating principle is: Live out of the forgiving word. That is not a theological statement for me. Concretely, what that means is that you look for errors and correct them immediately. You get the block out of the printing process on the fifteenth time it comes through, not the fifteen-hundredth time it comes through. I submit that

you can only do that if you are living out of the forgiving word that says your significance is not dependent on error-free performance; the thing that matters in the whole situation is the effectiveness of getting your product out. Then relative to distribution and building on the strengths you have, my practical operating principle is: Decentralize materials storage. In terms of Town Meeting, the gifts we have are the circuits. Suppose ninety per cent of our Town Meeting workbooks were stored within 100 miles or two hours of their final destination. Think about how easy it would be to put five cardboard boxes in the back seat of a prior's car which is going on the circuit anyway. He can drop off the workbooks.

Relative to accountability, in production by operating principle there is: Judge by the effect, not by the effort. No matter how much effort you put in an i.e. cover, if it conveys uncaring, throw it out. Oh boy, we struggled with that last fall. Be concerned with the key imaginal effect rather than how to use a media gimmick. We are people who are out to change images. We work on the things that will do that job. Relative to printing and accountability, my operating principle is: Schedule your printing tasks according to consequences. When I arrived at Research Centrum this fall, I learned rather quickly that the way you got your material printed was to establish a relationship with either someone assigned to the print shop or someone else who knew how to print whether or not they were assigned to the printshop at the time. Then you got your materials done when you wanted them by relying on these personal relationships and their willingness to work overtime or off-hours or whatever. That is not going to be effective in terms of the increasing demands for publishing. We are going to be forced to make choices on what to publish and what not to publish within a certain time period. But the only way we can make choices that are missionally effective here, is to objectively lay out what the total picture and demand is. Then when someone comes with a project that they need to have printed immediately, we show them the whole picture and let the consensus emerge as to whether it needs to be done right now no matter what else is on the presses; that is a struggle for both the ones making the requests and the Publishing House. That is a corporate kind of decision. It is not a decision for one man who happens to be ink-smearred and almost caught in a press as it runs a hundred-million miles an hour. It needs to be a corporate consensus-making kind of activity that can only be done by looking at all of the consequences for every particular decision. Then, finally, in terms of accountability in distribution my practical principal is: Move it, move it, move it! Anything stored in this building is useless; it needs to be out in the field. It needs to be where the action is, where the war is. There isn't any war around here. We are behind the front lines. We are safe here--hiding behind all the stacks of materials. The thing that pushes me on this is when I first went into the print shop there was a long list of requests for materials from overseas Houses. Each day we would list the things that needed to be done, and because an area prior was not actually standing at our desk, but someone from Uptown Five or Social Demonstration was there with requests for 10,000 Voices or 500 Malivada documents, the overseas requests were always at the bottom of the list. Until we decided to take a group of people during a Week II and do nothing but collect all that material, wrap it properly, do all the necessary paper work, go the the Finance Commission and get finances required and so on, that material was not going to get out of this building to the battlefield where it needed to be. Move it! Fewer battles were won because we did not move it.



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