# Management and Leadership
## Insight for Effective Practice

Review from
the web
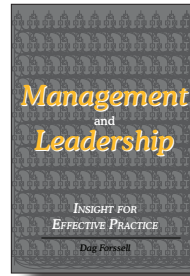
## Excellent volume.

[This book] describes an approach based on perceptual control theory (PCT). Insights emphasized in this book include:

* We can never know reality. The physical world exists but we are limited in what we can know about the reality we are part of.

* What we experience is the brain's perceptual activities, not the world itself. All we know about the world is based on our perceptions of it.

* Behavior/action is the means we use to affect our perception of the world and attempt to make it the way we want it.

* Behavior is the control of perception. We do not control behavior/actions; they are automatic - what they have to be under the circumstances to achieve the desired perception or outcome. Thus, behavior/actions are of little interest. What counts are what people understand, what they want, and how they interpret/perceive.

* Behavior will change if you provide good information and associates choose to adopt it, thereby aligning their understanding with yours. This, in turn, changes their wants as they compare them to current circumstances and take action to satisfy their revised wants.

From the standpoint of managing and leading, PCT calls for a shift from regarding people as entities that must be motivated by external means to understanding they are living control systems, each of whom is behaving on the basis of how he/she sees and interprets the world. PCT managers use a discovery process to become familiar with the perceptions, priorities, and wants of their direct reports rather than attempting to control their behavior and actions.

PCT managers enhance and augment their interpersonal skills in order to become trusted allies. With a foundation built on trust and frequent exchanges of thoughts and ideas, employees are more inclined to explore issues of a personal nature. By gaining a firm understanding of what employees want and how they perceive their current contributions to the organization in terms of the organization's purpose and objectives, a manager is better positioned to exercise influence in a way that produces employee-organization alignment.

Two examples of situations in which PCT can be applied are performance management and conflict resolution. To manage performance, PCT leaders adopt the maxim that high performance will result when an employee's perceptions and wants are aligned with the organization's purpose and objectives. The challenge is to learn how to look at a subordinate's behavior from an inside perspective rather than from the position of an external observer.

Key questions include the following. What are the person's wants, needs, values, beliefs, principles, intentions, standards, and goals? How does the individual perceive the organization's goals and objectives? How does he or she perceive the results that are to be produced and the most expedient way to achieve these results?

In conflict situations PCT managers intervene based on the premise that people are capable of successfully managing their differences once they understand the perceptions and wants underlying each other's actions. In the role of a facilitator a manager can initiate a discussion of each party's perception and interpretation of the current situation followed by a brief review of his/her stored perceptions. The parties then outline their wants. This leads to an examination of the actions they have taken to satisfy their wants and the consequences of these actions. Next, the parties can explore how to accommodate each other's wants and preferences. Finally, there is a discussion of suggestions for resolution followed by an agreement about next steps.

Clearly, the PCT approach is a departure from the traditional management style of command and control. PCT requires managers and leaders to:

*   Possess effective communication skills, including the ability to actively listen and the skill to clarify what they think they are hearing;

*   Build relationships so employees feel comfortable talking about themselves and non-technical subjects;

*   Ask questions, not just issue orders;

*   Refrain from telling employees how to do something (micromanaging) and consider alternative approaches to achieving results;

*   Believe engaging employees in conversations about their perceptions and wants is a worthwhile, cost-effective use of human resources;

*   Develop increased awareness of how their own perceptions influence how they regard and interact with each employee.


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