Continuity and Change in the Evolution of Work and Human Resource Management

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This essay is a brief review of the evolution of work and human resource management, an evolution that parallels the development of civilization. Both continuity and change are apparent in the role of work in society and in its management. There has been continuity and change down through the centuries in motivation to work, in the sense of equity, and in how work is organized. For instance, early on much of work was self-service; it is moving in that direction again. Tradition and sentiment shaped the work organization. Gradually, tradition and sentiment were replaced by rationality. Currently, we see in the sociotechnical design of work the continuity as well as a coming together of both the rational and the socioemotional aspects of work in organizations. Looking at the past may help human resource managers to frame the issues involved and the expectations of future developments. © 1994 by John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

THE NEED FOR AWARENESS OF HOW WORK IS CHANGING

Both continuity and change are seen in the shifts that occurred as a world moved from (a) a paleolithic hunting and gathering to (b) a neolithic, classical, medieval, preindustrial craft economy of farmers, miners and artisans, then to (c) a mass production economy of factory employees and then (d) to the postindustrial world of knowledge workers. As noted in Table I, in the craft economy, workers were autonomous, broadly skilled, used general-purpose tools, customized products, and depended for remuneration on their skill and output (Carnevale, 1991). The industrial revolution brought mass production, interchangeable parts, and specified jobs; each employee required a lesser portfolio of skills; planning, direction, and control were subordinated to an organizational hierarchy. Remuneration was geared to time served and/or output. A return to the age of the artisan is seen in the movement in the 1990s toward total quality improvement, which returns much of planning, direction, and control to work teams by giving them the responsibility and required skills for all phases of the conversion of a customer's order into a delivery of the product which will fully satisfy the
customer. Again remuneration is being linked to skills and output (Carnevale, 1991).

Human resource management (HRM), in the paleolithic and early neolithic eras, as noted in Table I, would have been handled by a temporary leader of the band of hunters. The band’s success would depend on cooperation among members as well as on leadership. Clan loyalty would be a force for such cooperation and leadership. Childrearing, home, hearth, and food gathering were women’s responsibilities. Human resource management in the late neolithic age would have centered on allocation of land and responsibilities for planting and tilling the soil, arrangements for cooperative irrigation, and cooperation in the magical rites for inducing fertility. In the longer age of artisans, HRM would have centered on development and institutionalization of tools, work spaces, guild regulations, and apprenticeship training.

In the classical world, HRM might have ranged from the buying and training of slaves to setting up programs for the education of scribes and scholars. In the Medieval and Renaissance world, rudiments of modern HRM appeared in the organization of the church and monastery. (The writer came upon a complete organization chart for a 10th century monastery near Ravenna, Italy.) Guild regulations were in place for the training of apprentices. Other human resources contributions would be seen in the self-help guide books available for courtiers, diplomats, proprietors of mines, and ship navigators.

In addition to navigation training, sophisticated map-making, and instrument development, HRM in the commercial revolution could be seen, for instance, in the large-scale recruitment (entrapment) of seamen. For example, in December the Dutch East India Company set out an annual fleet of ships to the East Indies. In the year 1778, 200 zielverkoopers were kept busy in Amsterdam enticing the lost, the homeless, the penniless, and the rustics into escaping from 16 hours a day building dikes with a promise of work on a two-year voyage of adventure. They offered room and board until the fleet sailed, but actually locked up their human “catch” in pitiful conditions for as long as five months. However, on the day the ships were to be manned, the crimps provided their prospective “recruits” with martial music on their trek to the hiring docks. The crimps earned about 25 per cent of the recruit’s pay, much of which was withheld until the seaman returned, if he returned alive (Miller, R., 1980).

With the onset of the industrial revolution and the factory system, rationalized mass production ultimately resulted in the appearance of personnel managers responsible for recruiting, selection, training, performance appraisal, selection testing, job classification, organizational charting, manpower and management planning, union-management relations, control mechanisms, and motivation to work.

In post-industrial society, we see the return in the 1990s to a new
Table I. The Parallel Evolution of Work and the Managing of Human Resources.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Era</th>
<th>Specializations</th>
<th>Some Types of Work That Emerged</th>
<th>Examples of Managing Human Resources That Emerged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paleolithic and Early Neolithic Era</td>
<td>Age of Generalists</td>
<td>Hunting, fishing, preparing food, shelter and clothing, magic-making.</td>
<td>Cooperative hunting, fishing, gathering; leadership based on strength, stamina, skill; clan loyalty; division of labor by age, sex, and tradition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Eras</td>
<td>Age of Specialists</td>
<td>Farming, stock raising, specialized arts and crafts, bartering, religious ritualizing, rudimentary mining and metal working.</td>
<td>Family work units, property rights, inherited occupation, large scale work forces, valuation of work done, rudimentary record-keeping, taxes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classical Era</td>
<td>Age of Artisans</td>
<td>Philosophy, writing, banking, long-distance commerce, architecture, mining, road-building.</td>
<td>Apprenticeship-training, capital equipment, appreciation of self-actualizing, and codification of rules of work and labor law, slavery, plantation systems, inventories.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medieval and Renaissance Eras</td>
<td>Age of Unskilled Workers</td>
<td>Tenant farming, use of water mills and windmills for energy.</td>
<td>Manorial system, cottage industry, human resources management of Church and monasteries, multinational organizations, urban trade centers, guild system, money and barter economies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Revolution</td>
<td>Age of Specialists</td>
<td>Seafaring, navigation, cartography, modern science.</td>
<td>Manpower planning and provisioning for long sea voyages, hygiene, delayed wages, bonuses, profit-sharing, reintroduction of slavery, resettlement of surplus populations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Revolution</td>
<td>Age of Specialists</td>
<td>Machine-tending, machine building and repair, water and steam power technicians, easily learned work.</td>
<td>Factory system, fixed work times, wage economy, assembly lines, reduced cost of labor, workers treated like interchangeable parts, hierarchical managerial organization, emphasis on owner satisfaction, performance appraisal by superiors, competitive manufacturing; advantage moves to Western Europe and North America.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-Industrial Revolution</td>
<td>Age of Teamwork and Self-Help</td>
<td>Data entry, programming, system analysis, computer design, production and maintenance, knowledge work, multiple job responsibilities, self-servicing.</td>
<td>Automation, shift away from manufacturing to service, downsizing, skill-based pay, peer performance appraisal, multifunctional team organization, cross-training, emphasis on satisfaction of all constituencies of organization.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
artisanship in teams. HRM needs to attend to the flexible, adaptable, learning organization; multifunctional team leadership; individual personality and team compatibility; group–machine–computer interfaces and processes; multiple skill training and cross-training; and speedy and accurate communications. HRM will become obsolete in tomorrow's world of work if it concentrates on yesterday's demands. It therefore becomes useful to look at the past, present, and future of work—what remains the same and what has changed in how work gets done.

Obviously much has changed over the years. We are all too familiar with the rapidity with which old types of jobs have disappeared (e.g., verifying machine operator) and the many more new ones that have taken their place (e.g., silicon chip inspector). A considerable portion of the 30,000 jobs described in the 1940 Dictionary of Occupational Titles had disappeared by 1990. Nonetheless, as you examine newly created jobs such as that of software specialist or automatic teller machine (ATM) repairman, you will find that these workers are using some equipment and tools little changed from the past. The specialist uses a century-old antiquated keyboard; the ATM repairman uses pliers already common in the Roman Empire.

As with the work done and the tools used, down through the centuries, there has been considerable continuity as well as change in the concepts of what work means, the motivation to work, the equitable exchange, and the work organization. To some extent, we may be moving back to where we began but at a higher level of sophistication. The roots of continuity and change are buried in implicit theories about work. Examining these theories may help us to understand our varied assumptions and values as to how we look at work today.

THE MEANING AND PURPOSE OF WORK

At the beginning of the human experience, work was central to immediate survival, subsistence, safety, and security. Work provided food, shelter, and clothing. Male hunting and fishing were paralleled by female food gathering. Colder climates required shelter and clothing (Coon, 1971). More certain subsistence, survival, safety, and security came with rudimentary farming and stock raising. Human resource management was seen in the emphasis on having large numbers of children, particularly sons, as available sources of labor and social security for the parents. Working at this subsistence level of safety and survival remains and still dominates in much of the Third World. (Workers who move from the bush to the mines of South Africa or from the villages to the cities of India leap directly from one age of work to another. HRM plays an important role in helping their transition.)

Social needs could be met during leisure time of the winter months or at night, but early on, the satisfaction of social needs was added to the
meaning of work. Work supported, satisfied, or placated significant others: family, tribe, community, masters, or gods. Work also came to serve in many but not all cultures as evidence of individual accomplishment in which individual craftsmen could place their marks on their work. Amount and quality of work became signs of individual success. Working for one’s own enjoyment of the work activity also appeared. Working became a means of satisfaction in its own right. Finally, philosophers and poets led the way toward self-actualization as the highest form of motivation to work—to use one’s particular mental and physical capacities to the fullest extent possible. Capacity became its own motivation.

Material benefits for work done remain important but in industrialized societies today, as a consequence of socialization processes, work carries a great deal of social significance which must be recognized by managers of human resources. We work because it is expected of us. In addition to unemployment’s impact on one’s sense of security (unless it is endemic and chronic among our peers), it is also a serious threat to the ego as well as to the pocketbook. The adult drifter, who deliberately shirks work, is an outcast, a pariah. He or she may be suffering from simple schizophrenia. The wealthy playboys, drug-addicted drop-outs, and other able-bodied persons who are content to remain on a permanent “dole,” share mainstream society’s opprobrium in common. But in addition to the effects of socializing us into seeking employment (and remaining employed), HRM must recognize that we work for the extrinsic rewards of income and to signal our relative success in life. We also work to satisfy our needs for security and recognition and/or because the work itself is intrinsically satisfying—doing the work itself satisfies our higher level needs for achievement and self-actualization.²

The motives and meaning of work are a consequence of individual differences as well as of cultural effects. Workaholics feel compelled to keep working fast and hard. For many of the gainfully employed, the motivation to work is mainly extrinsic—a matter of earning a living; for others, the motivation to work is more intrinsic—the work must be interesting, challenging, and meaningful.

Satisfaction of these higher level needs (Maslow, 1954) appeared early as did opportunities for some at least to gain intrinsic as well as extrinsic satisfaction from their work. Stone tool chipping and cave painting provided such opportunities. Much additional intellectual work also was apparent. Myths, stories, and oral histories were created, sung, and memorized by successive generations. Already some higher level needs for social identity, recognition, and development were being met. The need for recognition was surprisingly evident in the Middle Ages. In addition to the stonemason’s individual marks on the stones, over 25,000 names of those who worked on the medieval cathedrals are recorded (Gimpel, 1983). While such making and naming provided individual recognition, it also may have served as the equivalent of.
human resource managers for keeping records and as a management control.

Early on, however, work also came to be influenced by supernatural and religious concerns. The work of painting the bison in the cave, even if done by itinerant craftsmen, provided magic to enhance the bison hunter’s success and to protect his security. Among the Incan peoples of Peru, work itself was a form of religious worship (Cobo, c. 1650/1990). Likewise, to some extent, the Egyptian pyramids were built as a religious contribution to the God-Pharaoh by whole villages whose men were conscripted for the purpose after harvesting had been completed (Edwards, 1985). A different religious view of work came from the Hebrews. Work was drudgery. (Ecclesiastes 3:17): “Therefore I hated life; because the work that is wrought under the sun is grievous unto me; for all is vanity and vexation of spirit.” Work was God’s curse on Adam. For Eve’s transgression, Adam and Eve were forced out of Paradise into the world of work. Ritual prayer had a much higher value to it than working. Work had to be avoided to keep the Sabbath. In the eyes of ultra-orthodox Jews, writing a message or flipping a light switch is work that profanes the Sabbath. Work is only a means to an end, to be done to make it possible to support a family and the synagogue and to provide the necessary time for prayer and study of the Torah. Tenth century Sephardic merchants who traveled routinely between Spain and India were prized as traveling scholars as much as for their trade.

The early Christians regarded work as God’s punishment for Adam’s original sin, but work also had a positive value. By working one could earn enough to share with one’s less fortunate brothers. However, they also continued to regard work as dissatisfying, for the early Christians also believed that in the Promised Kingdom they would be freed from toil and this, of course, engendered a lack of concern for the material world. A slow evolutionary process had to take place before work and the motivation to work became more than acts of charity or a means of expiation.

In the European Renaissance and Reformation, new religious ideas were developed about the value of work which assisted the development of capitalism. For Martin Luther, work was a means of serving God, and one of the best ways to serve Him was to work to the best of one’s ability. Work was a berechtung, a calling from God. Each person serves God well by doing his work well. The cobbler who makes a good pair of shoes is serving God just as much as the preacher who delivers a fine sermon. One works hard and enjoys it for God’s sake (Pelikan, 1923). John Calvin (1536/1936) fostered similar attitudes because he preached that one’s work was the will of God and that by hard work the Kingdom of God could be established on earth. Success in one’s work, or profession, was a sign that one’s labor was pleasing to God. The rich man was now extolled because his profits attested to his success in serving God. Many thinkers claim that the doctrines of Martin Luther
and Calvin marked the beginning of modern capitalism and the ideological foundation for the modern factory. This ideology, which exalts the man who survives in the competitive world of work and who also "knows the value of a dollar," evolved into the Protestant Ethic (Weber, 1927/1950) that still remains a force in much of American society. In Prussia, the ideology underlay the ultimate goal of everyone's work (peasant, artisan, merchant, bureaucrat, military officer, and the King, himself)—the goal of service to the state (Koch, 1987).

In the Graeco-Roman classical world, there was also a profound distaste for manual work. Most work was to be performed by slaves (Tilgher, 1962). Contemplation, discourse, warfare, politics, and government were the fit activities for the citizenry. Cicero (1951) spoke for the Romans when he said that land-holding of latifundias for agriculture and big business were the only occupations worthy of a free man. Even intellectual work, except as a hobby, was often relegated by the Romans to Greek slaves. Aristocracies everywhere continued with this attitude toward work. Work (as well as trade) was beneath the dignity of the Spanish hidalgos, English gentlemen, and Southern plantation owners. From the banks of the Rio Plata to the shores of Virginia colonizing settlements in the New World required slaves, indentured servants, and lower class paid workers to do the work of building communities (White, 1980; Keith, 1977).

The relation of one's work to one's status in society tended to vary with the society. In India (Gould, 1987), the Brahmin priestly caste was highest followed in order by the castes of warrior, merchant, and peasant. Outcasts were relegated to the dirtiest and most menial tasks. In Japan (Varley, 1973), the merchant was below the peasant until economic superiority of the merchant finally won out in the Meiji era. In Korea (Jacobs, 1985), one thanked one's school teacher with a tip, but not one's taxi cab driver. Physicians had exalted positions in the United States (Deeg & Paterson, 1947), less so elsewhere. As symbols of the factory worker and the peasant farmer, the hammer and sickle symbolized the glorification of the working classes in communist societies. Slacking off or refusing to work was a legally punishable offense against the state (Lane, 1986).

In the 19th century, work also was seen as particularly salutatory for one's health in capitalist society. Prisons shifted from places for doing penitence to places for rehabilitation through learning how to be a better worker (Glenn, 1984).

Work, and your house shall be duly fed
Work, and rest shall be won
I hold that a man had better be dead
Than alive when his work is done (Alice Cary, 1882).

The strong connection between one's work and one's health remains (Kahn, 1951). In parallel, in Marxist society, work (ideologically) was
expected to be therapeutic and rehabilitating. The worker and peasant were glorified (Lane, 1986).

In America, among the first questions we ask of someone whom we have just met is “What (work) do you do?” and “Where do you work?” Gainful employment provides us with an important source of our identity. It certifies who we are. Elsewhere, in collectivistic societies, it greatly enhances one’s sense of belonging (Ronen, 1986).

In sum, it helps human resource managers to appreciate that the meaning and purpose of work have been strongly influenced by societal beliefs over the centuries, and continue to be so, with consequential effects on different societies. Nevertheless, much continuity also remains in the importance of material benefits and with work as a cause of our status and well-being.

EQUITY

Equity currently forms a particularly important aspect of the work scene (Jaques, 1961). It also has been a central issue in managing human resources down through the ages. Again both continuity and changes have been seen. Once humankind no longer worked directly to gather food, make clothing, and build shelter for survival, unless enslavement occurred, equity of exchange of work for indirect payments of barter or direct payment of monetary wages became of continuing importance. In the 12th century B.C., the first recorded strike took place in Deir-el-Medina, a village of Egyptian construction workers hired for building tombs across the river from Thebes. The workers struck for a raise in their beer and barley payments for the work they were doing. According to the records, they downed their tools and marched on the Mayor of Thebes who was the human resource manager in charge. They won the strike (Bierbrier, 1982).

Although people might sell themselves or their children into slavery or serfdom to pay their debts, to avoid starvation, or to obtain protection, enslavement and the enslavement of offspring was a consequence of being kidnapped, committing a criminal offense, or being captured as a war prisoner. Slave labor was enforced by military and legal sanctions. Masters regarded slavery as equitable since the slave was a capital investment with operating expenses for which the slave’s labor was exchanged. The slaves obviously had a different opinion of the matter.

The tension remains between equality—to each according to his need, and equity—to each according to his contribution. How much should be paid to the worker for the work done, and how much should be left to the sponsor of the work from the revenues of the work? Should each worker be paid the same or according to the worth of the work done? In collectivistic societies and under idealistic socialism, equality is favored. Everyone shares in the differential efforts of all. The kibbutz
emphasizes each according to his or her need. In individualistic societies, equity is favored. It is each according to his or her contribution (Luntley, 1989).

The Bible endorsed the need for equity. Psalm 42 declared “Thou renderest to every man according to his work.” Abraham Lincoln (1858) excoriated slave owners for exploitation of the labor of the slaves who worked for them. Thomas Carlyle (1843) argued that “a fair day’s wages for a fair day’s work . . . is the everlasting right of man.”

To buttress the argument against equality and to advocate the argument for differential rewarding of the rich and the poor, Calvin espoused the predestination of the Elect. The Elect of God succeed in their endeavors in this world. With the strength of their faith in God, the Elect will be rewarded in their work. Because they are successful, they know they have been elected (Calvin, 1536/1936).

By the late 19th century, such equity was seen by Herbert Spencer (1880) as part of the natural order of the survival of the fittest expounded by Darwin. The rich got that way because they were smart and worked hard. The poor remained so because they lacked capacity and were lazy (Jones, 1980). The rich families survived; the poor ones had a more difficult time surviving (Alexander, 1979).

Economist David Lombardo, early in the 19th century, formulated the Iron Law of Wages. According to this law, in the natural order of things, wages are set at the minimum at which workers and their families can just survive. If wages were higher than necessary for survival, there would be less incentive to work. Besides, the greater than necessary costs of labor would reduce profits and impede progress because of the reduced amount of profits available for capital formation (Bell, 1953). The Iron Law of Wages is seen in disguise today when social costs are ignored and a recession and its increased unemployment are regarded by some human resource managers as the way to bring wages back in line with desired profitability.

As the pace of industrialization quickened, the view shifted from a precapitalistic feeling of responsibility toward the laboring poor to a feeling that the poor should attempt to better their lot by their own efforts. There were fewer social nets in those days. Unemployed workers and their families could starve to death, and Social Darwinists could justify the result. Widows could and should be sued for the damage to the machinery caused by their spouses fatally injured by the machinery. Whoever managed human resources looked at the laboring classes as merely thoughtless children who required direction to perform tasks assigned by their superiors. If the workers performed their tasks well and were deserving, they would be provided for by the rich.

By the end of the 19th century, the managerial class had embraced the doctrine of Social Darwinism. With publication of Darwin’s theory of evolution in 1859 and Spencer’s interpretation (1880), it was assumed by industrialists that competition was the way of all life and that the indus-
trialists’ success was evidence of their fitness to manage the organizational complex. Conversely, consistent with Calvin’s doctrine of predestination, the state of the laboring poor only confirmed their basic unfitness for survival.

Opposing this dog-eat-dog view were the proponents of a pure socialism (each according to his or her needs). Work done was divorced from compensation for it (Luntley, 1989). Today, the human resource manager needs to sense that the industrialized world reflects some of both approaches in varying degrees with downsizing, discharge, and abusive supervision as well as social nets, minimum wage laws, progressive income taxes, and mandated benefits and pension plans for employees.

By the middle of the first millennium B.C., paid labor had been instituted which in turn fit with money-based international trade and commerce. A vast collection of gold objects and Roman coins is contained in the temple treasury in Madurai in the south of India, which is attributed to the trade that flourished between the Mediterranean world and South India up through the early centuries of the Christian era (Chandra, 1977).

The commercial and industrial revolutions were seen by those who espoused a materialistic or economic determination of history to depend on money and material benefits as the prime or sole incentives to work. Society developed as a consequence of the accumulation of capital. Economic and social philosophers as different in ideology as Adam Smith (1776/1976) and Karl Marx (1848/1964) shared in common the assumption that business management was motivated primarily by the self-interested acquisition of material goods and the maximization of profits. This assumed behavior was good for society according to Smith and evil according to Marx. Smith is gaining the upper hand over Marx today, but free enterprisers and socialists continue to share in common the belief in economic determinism. Furthermore, they have moved closer to each other in ideology about the importance of profits to enterprise and of incentive payments to workers. Both share a deductive approach to understanding based on assumptions about humankind that are convenient but not necessarily valid. These include such empirically questionable axioms as the assertion that workers innately dislike work and are motivated mainly by money, material benefits, and the need for security. Money is viewed as the cement for building reliability and predictability in the continuing relations among people doing work.

Payment schedules for work done extend far back in recorded history and predate money economies. Regulation of wages by government and guild was the norm for many centuries. Cottage industries featured piece rates called the “putting out” system. A merchant supplied the materials and controlled the overall production process but the work was done at home at the worker’s pace (Filbee & Abbott, 1982). Payment for working a specific amount of time, say 12 hours a day, arose with
factory manufacturing. Participatory bonuses at highly differential rates were a feature of privateering. On a ship of 100 officers and men, the ship captain might expect 30 percent or more of the earnings, the able seaman, much less than 1 percent (Stivers, 1975).

Continuity and change are reflected in our current controversies about equity in our debates about progressive taxation, in establishing and paying according to the comparative worth of jobs rather than the sex of the jobholder, in using the government as the employer of the last resort, and in the shareholders concerns about the compensation of chief executive officers of businesses and their golden parachutes.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Along with the motivation to work and the questions about equity and equality, a third aspect of work—how it is organized—has also seen both continuity and change down through the centuries.

First men and women did the work themselves or in small groups. Then animals were domesticated and employed as more efficient substitutes for heavy labor. The former manual hauler became a driver who depended more on his head than his hands. Agricultural methods improved. The ox-drawn plow replaced the cow. Better strains of wheat, barley, and cattle were bred. The early farmer could generate surpluses to use for trade. As a pioneer, the early farmer had to be a generalist dealing directly with all requirements of tools, equipment, and materials for his farming (de Camp, 1972). But, eventually the farmer began to be able to barter his surplus for the goods he needed that were produced by specialists such as his shoes, weapons, and carts (de Camp, 1990, p. 9).

Work for specialists became more complex requiring more training time to master it. With the advent of organized agriculture in the Nile, Tigris-Euphrates, and Indus river valleys, came massive works of organized irrigation, the surpluses of food to support the work of building of temples and tombs, and the specialization of jobs. Architects, engineers, contractors, foremen, craftsmen, and laborers came with these massive works. Astronomical and river level calculations resulted in the formation of priestly classes who could forecast the equinoxes, solstices, and annual floods. Scribes were needed to record accounts and write messages, letters, and histories (Wittfogel, 1957). Some of the earliest extant records were bookkeeping ledgers (Snell, 1982).

In the uncompleted tomb of the Pharaoh Seti I—c. 1270 B.C. (Cott & El Zeini, 1987)—running 300 feet into the hillside, one can see on the tunneled walls leading to the inner funeral parlor, fine paintings in still-bright reds, yellows, and blues. At about 200 feet, which is as far as the painting crew had gotten in the partly completed tomb, one sees the dotted outlines that were drawn in red on the walls by the foreman-artist to be filled in by the painters. Many of the paintings show how the
tunnels were dug, how the sleds hauled out the debris, and what numbers of laborers were required to handle the equipment. Light was provided by series of reflecting mirrors beginning with sunlight striking the first mirror. Paintings for the benefit of the deceased pharaoh’s afterlife show all forms of work being done from cooking to carpentering, with models (even full-size ones) of whatever would be necessary for the pharaoh’s comforts. Products have been preserved ranging from the heavy rope of the sailor to the tools of the carpenter’s trade which have remained unchanged in form for 5,000 years.

Guidelines were published by Graeco-Roman authors for the organization of work ranging from building architecture to maintaining municipal water supplies. They continued to influence developments in the Middle Ages, through the Renaissance into modern times. Scholarly treatises for the management of human resources were prepared by classical authors such as Cato (c. 160 B.C./1935) on work requirements to run a Roman plantation and on how to manage slaves; Vitruvius (c. 80–20 B.C.) on how to organize mining and quarrying operations and how to manufacture chemicals and pharmaceuticals; and Sextus Julius Frontinus (1st century A.D.), on how to survey land and build aqueducts. For example, Cato set out the manpower requirements to staff a 150-acre farm: overseer, housekeeper, 5 farmhands, 3 carders, donkey driver, swineherd, and shepherd. Extra hands were to be hired at harvest time (Singer, Holmyard, & Hall, 1954).

In late Roman times and in Medieval Europe, serfs, freedmen, and citizens became the specialized labor force. Building a medieval cathedral required dedicated specialized labor (Gimpel, 1983). Training in specialties was from father to son or through long-term apprenticeships. Protection of craft rights arose early. Craft guilds were present 2,500 years ago in Achaemenid, Mesopotamia (Weisberg, 1967). The degree of specialization in the medieval urban workforce (Swanson, 1989) is illustrated by as many as a hundred different guilds in a medieval European City. Narrow specialties emerged. For example, woodworkers could belong to one of many different guilds; thus joiners, carpenters, wood carvers, and turners (on lathes) formed separate guilds (Kranzberg, 1973–4).

After the barbarians had settled down, Europe again made further progress in the rationalization of work and industrial organization with considerable documentation about the design, manpower requirements, and costs of construction of castles, mills, and cathedrals (Gimpel, 1983).

From the middle of the 15th to the middle of the 17th centuries, Agricola’s (1556/1950) De re metallica served as the handbook for miners and metallurgists. Agricola described how the mine was headed by a master miner with clerical, technical, and craft support. Also described was the work done by the different craftsmen: miners, shovellers, windlass operators, carriers, sorters, washers, and smelters. Three 7-hour shifts ran around the clock allowing an hour for getting to the work site.
Human, animal, and water power were employed for the water pumps and ventilation bellows.

The Need for Organization

Large-scale construction projects necessitated formation of hierarchies requiring supervisors, managers, and specialists. As people began to work on large irrigation or temple-building projects, it became advantageous to divide the labor so that each person specialized in only one part of the task (Durkheim, 1893/1947). There were, however, many potential costs when the planning of a task was separated from carrying it out, such as the need for better communications, greater commitment, and more concern for the work done by oneself and others (Bass, 1970). If work was divided, coordination had to be introduced among the workers.

The organizational structure became more complex as a consequence of increasing technological requirements. Organization was necessary when large and complex works were to be completed, policies to be established, decisions to be made, people and property to be protected, and where the actions might involve using money, equipment, materials, information, access to markets and/or facilities. Why? Because, among other things, organization reduced the uncertainty about the necessary performance of the people, and the distribution of resources to complete the integrated efforts.

When two or more people worked together to achieve some common purpose, the speed and accuracy of their joint performance depended considerably on how well each could predict what the other would do—how certain each was about the other's forthcoming performance. They were organized to some degree in their efforts if they could predict rather than guess what each would do. Two or more rowers had to predict what each other would do in order to move and steer the boat. The problem became magnified when 40 rowers manning two or three banks of oars on each side of a galley had to engage in complex maneuvers of the ship (Morrison & Coates, 1986).

Early History of Organizing

In a sense, human history is the evolution of the ways people developed to provide themselves with predictability of working relationships. At first, predictability of relationships must have been a family matter. What to expect from others depended on their sex (i.e., women nursed babies), or age, strength, and the like. As pointed out earlier, in paleolithic times men and older boys hunted; women, girls, and younger children gathered. As experiences recurred in an extended family,
some men developed reputations as successful hunters, fighters, or shamans. Specialized work came to be self-selected, inherited, or assigned. Thus, old men, wise or foolish, were assigned the work of judges and decision-makers in much of prerational, traditional society, partly because their memories served as libraries. Much work became ritualized over the generations as it passed from father to son, and mother to daughter. The hereditary nature of occupational assignments became fixed by Diocletian's edicts in the Roman Empire and became institutionalized as serfdom in the Middle Ages in Western Europe and later on in Eastern Europe. Slavery disappeared in Medieval Northern Europe only to be revived with European expansion into the New World and the rationalization of the enslavement of others based on racial differences.

Eventually, how people worked together in the traditional, prerational world (and how they still do in many nonindustrialized societies) was strongly associated with ritual, where the outcome of the work might not be as important as the specific ways in which it was accomplished. People did what was expected of them organizationally as a consequence of their relative status, their family connections, age, sex, or clan identification.

The prerational approach to organized work emphasizes deference to status and doing things in particular ways. Or it may be a matter of group affiliation. In sub-Saharan Africa emerging from tribalism it is still difficult for human resource managers to introduce merit ratings, since this would require evaluating subordinates according to their actual performance, not their tribal identification (Gutkind, 1970). The prerational approach ignores or discounts costs and accomplishments. There is little concern for planning, time requirements, and searching for better ways to attain objectives by improving the method of attainment. However, work is rewarding in its own right. Working relations between people have importance without reference to the contribution of the relations to costs or accomplishments.

Among ancient civilizations, most workshops consisted of a small collection of individual craftsmen, usually no more than twelve. For larger enterprises, such as mining or quarrying, hierarchical organizations appeared. In Greece, a master miner might be in charge of three gangs of laborers with some rationality involved in the decisions as to their assignments (Healey, 1978). The strong men picked at the ore face; the weaker men and boys transported the ore; and the women and old men sifted through the ore-bearing rock for the ore. Ten-hour shifts were worked.

It is interesting to note that safety was already of concern in the work place. In a report of an ancient Egyptian quarrying expedition into the desert, the foreman boasted that he had not lost a man or a mule (Kranzberg, 1973-4).

Also, early in historic times much organized work of massive propor-
tions was accomplished by traditional societies, using, to a major extent, some of the elements of rationality which must have been required for such accomplishments. Remarkable building feats—Stonehenge, the Great Wall and the Grand Canal of China, the many temples and palaces of India and Southeast Asia, the cathedrals of Europe, the pyramids and temples of Egypt and meso-America, the roads of Rome and Incan Peru and the causeways of Mexico—were completed by ancient and medieval man, and required massive organizations of men and materials. And rational, hierarchical structures were employed. For example, the chief executive officer in building the pyramids was the master builder, a nobleman from the court of the Pharaoh. As both architect and engineer, he directed a staff, overseers and foremen, each of whom in turn had a scribe and a recorder (Edwards, 1985).

The megalithic culture of the Mediterranean and East Atlantic coasts illustrated the extent to which massive work could be accomplished involving quarrying 30-ton stone slabs, dragging or barging them hundreds of miles, then setting them up as lintels over equally heavy stone posts in mathematically precise locations so that they would serve to mark astronomical cycles of the seasons and years. This provided the means for scheduling religious rituals as well as practical information about when to plow, to plant, and to harvest (Burl, 1976).

**Advent of the Industrial Revolution**

Early factory managers were familiar with Adam Smith's (1776) discussion in the *Wealth of Nations* of the division of labor in the newly established pin factory. Instead of one craftsman completing 18 operations, each operation could be handled by a different worker with little of the overall skill of the traditional craftsman. They adopted what they regarded as highly rational procedures for organizing the work efforts under their control. The owner-managers provided the plant site and machines, supervised the workers, assigned specialized tasks, and introduced hard-to-maintain discipline to a work force which had been heretofore free to work at its own pace and schedule. With enlargement came hired managers and foremen to work for the owners.

Division of labor became widely practiced in the Soho foundry managed by James Watt in the 1790's. Careful consideration was given by Watt to plant layout, departmentalization, planning, and the control of material flow (Morris, 1963). Extensive production recording and rudimentary time study were used at the Soho foundry along with piece rate incentive payments (which in 1791 were responsible for a strike). Eli Whitney in the United States as well as Marc Brunel in Britain conceived and put into practice mass production of equipment and the interchangeability of component parts (Hoagland, 1964).

The medieval Venetian arsenal was an example of assembly-line out-
fitting of warships. The ship moved past the different fitters until it was ready for sea-duty. Although Henry Ford was probably not aware of or influenced by the Venetian arsenal, he was familiar with 19th century meatpacking in Chicago. Overhead-powered trolleys brought the carcasses past the differently tasked meat cutters at a steady pace. Ford applied the same principles to auto assembly in 1913. The size and diversity of operations multiplied the layers of executives, managers, supervisors, and foreman in charge of relatively low-skilled workers each responsible for only a small part of the total operation (Kranzberg, 1973-4).

Profoundly influencing human resource management, from the late 19th century onward, as popularized by Frederick W. Taylor (1911), and many others who followed his call for Scientific Management, came a series of propositions based on a mixture of observation, experience, wisdom, and what passed for logical deduction about how to rationalize the work place and the working environment. Taylor's most famous case dealt with organizing a gang to manhandle pig iron. In recent years, his "pig-tale" has been seriously questioned (Wrege & Ferroni, 1974). Another case dealt with shoveling operations. In 1909, Frank Gilbreth applied Taylor's principles to bricklaying and along with his wife Lillian, developed the methods and measurements for time management (Spiegel & Myers, 1953).

To the assumptions held by the economic determinists about people's inherent dislike for work and the prime importance of money as a motivator were added assumptions that workers need external incentives to attain what they are capable of doing, that they lack initiative or willingness to accept responsibility for their own efforts, that they are unable and unwilling to plan ahead, and that they are likely to make errors which they would not be able or willing to correct. Like the economic determinists, these proponents of Scientific Management provided normative prescriptions—the one best way—about how to maximize productivity. Their advice on how to organize to maximize operational efficiency evolved into a variety of exhortations about how to effectively plan, direct, and control the work of others. Axiomatic for them were propositions such as: Persons should know who reports to them and to whom they report. Authority and responsibility should flow in a clear unbroken line from the top to the bottom of the hierarchy. Authority to make decisions should be commensurate with responsibility for those decisions. Moreover, authority should be delegated so that decisions take place as close as possible to the point of action.

Furthermore, no one should receive orders from more than one superior. Responsibility for specific areas should not be duplicated or overlapping. Recurring decisions should be programmed, routinized, and delegated downward to subordinates. Only nonrecurring issues should be referred to superiors. Finally, labor should be divided so that common activities are meaningfully clustered into one job or one department;
unrelated activities should be grouped elsewhere. No one position should have too numerous or complex duties. Responsibilities should be written clearly and understood by job occupants (Bass & Barrett, 1981). Leavitt (1965) pointed to the striking similarity between this engineering approach to organizing for work and present-day operations management. Linear programming or PERT was added to time and motion study. Computer monitoring was added to stop watch monitoring. You may see this overall approach in practice when you next visit your favorite fast food shop.

Purpose of Organization

To be organized means to behave rationally with knowledge of the rules required to do so, but such rationality is limited (March & Simon, 1958). I cannot know fully what is in the mind of the other driver of a vehicle in the other lane of a two-lane highway which is approaching my moving auto. The other driver and I are dealing with each other as a temporary two-person organization. Although I can never be fully certain about the other driver, I expect that we both will obey the rule to stay on our side of the white line dividing the lanes. Our temporary organization helps to reduce my uncertainty as well as that of the other driver.

Based on observations of labor unions and political movements, Michels (1915), a socialist, formulated an "iron law" of oligarchy which said that because of the desire by the "incompetent" members for strong leadership in any organization, a continuing proliferation of rule-based departments, branches, and roles would occur. In the same sociological framework, Weber (1924/47) emphasized the functionality and utility of the high degree of structuring found in such an organizational form in the Prussian bureaucracy. Such bureaucratic and oligarchic structures were seen by him to provide a reduction in potential uncertainty and an increase in predictability in relations between people who must work together. Building on this rationale, Merton (1940) saw this demand for reliability in formal organizations as stemming from the sponsors of the work effort, the owners of a business, or the directors of a public agency. This emphasis on reliability makes each individual strive to follow the rules laid down for him. Personal relations are minimized, and individuals avoid responsibility for their own actions (They are fully programmed; they are only following orders). There is increased use of categorization as a decision-making procedure (Once you can locate the category in which a problem can be placed, the rule to be applied is automatically given). Maintaining and understanding the organization of rule-based roles, prescriptions, and categories, become more important than accomplishing task objectives. The rigidity of behavior produces conflicts with the external world of suppliers, customers, and clients, but insiders
rush to one another’s defense, building in-group status symbols to coerce or persuade each other about the adequacy of their approach, thus minimizing uncertainty inside the organization (March & Simon, 1958).

Opposing Philosophies of Organization

Over the years, two opposing philosophies for leading the work force have been advocated. On the one hand, as in Machiavelli’s (1513/1962) advice to the Prince, emphasis was laid on manipulative approaches to directing and controlling a work organization by maintaining social distance, withholding information, using diversionary tactics, bluffing, and the like. People are inherently evil and need the strong imposition of rules and order to do good. Mutual predictability and organizational reliability require manipulation, “managing the news,” promises of payoff for reliability, persuading with promises of extrinsic rewards, salesmanship, along with veiled threats to unleash punishment. Dale Carnegie’s (1936) How to Win Friends and Influence People was in this manipulative tradition. (He advocated giving support and approval to the targets of one’s persuasive attempts, then asking them to change to avoid losing the support and warmth which had been extended to them.)

The opposite philosophy was advanced by Ralph Waldo Emerson (1903), John Dewey (1930), Thomas Jefferson (1939), and Robert Owen (Anonymous, 1821/1972), as well as by the nineteenth-century anarchists (Goodway, 1989). They saw people as inherently good and believed that if they were freed from the constraints of arbitrary maladaptive rules and orders and allowed to participate in matters affecting themselves through consultation, group discussion, open communication, and shared decision making, they would be highly motivated to do their best, would be most stimulated into creative accomplishment, and would be willing and able to accept responsibility for directing and controlling their own actions. With these assumptions about people, it follows that mutual predictability and organization reliability accrue from participation, involvement, and understanding by the members of the organization of its methods and objectives. Successful operation requires commitment.3

Increasingly influencing human resource management in the last decades of the 20th century, the “human relations movement” began in 1924 with the well-known observations at the Hawthorne Works by Elton Mayo and his associates of the effects on productivity of supervisors’ interest in workers’ morale, personal needs, and attitudes (Roethlesberger & Dixon, 1947). Workers’ primary groups (their informal organization) were seen as most significant for understanding their performance. This was in comparison with more tangible factors then in

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vogue among psychologists and industrial engineers such as improving lighting, providing rest periods, improving work methods, or improving the learning of skills like telegraphy or typewriting (Vitelles, 1932).

The human relations approach took opposite positions about organizing from the views espoused by Scientific Management. To the need for direct lines of authority was added attention to informal leadership. Overlapping assignments and cross-training were to be promoted. Boundaries between jobs and requirements should be specified in advance but should also evolve organically through experience and feedback. Jobs should be enriched and enlarged rather than restricted in scope (Hackman & Lawler, 1971).

The Marriage

By 1990, in hierarchically organized firms such as General Motors, to further the quality manufacturing of automobiles, bottom-up influence and interfunctional teamwork have been added to top-down direction to empower and enable interfunctional teams to contribute to the total process.

In sum, although it is being flattened considerably, the hierarchical organization is still mainly with us to provide the large operations with its required coordination, prediction, and reliability. Nevertheless, we have been witnessing systematic change in the extent to which social dynamics are impressing themselves on how work is organized to meet both the social and technological requirements for getting work done. In some extreme instances, we are witnessing a revolution in factory management; here again, we can see a circular historical development. Early on, the prehistoric band of hunters must have discussed how they were going to track and kill their prey. The high point of structured, rational, hierarchical formalization of organization of work came early in the 20th century exemplified for factory work in Charlie Chaplin’s Modern Times. Now, in human resource management, we are slowly but surely moving toward an integrated social and rational approach—sociotechnical design.

The sociotechnical approach reflects the continuity and change to be found in HRM. The required planning of work of the past becomes self-planning; the required imposed direction of the past becomes self-direction; and the required supervisory control becomes self-control (Myers, 1968). Empowerment of the individual employee and the small team to plan, direct, and control its own operations is now being popularized.

Both the rational and the socioemotional enter into the principles of sociotechnical design for human resource management (Cherns, 1976). The job’s tasks must be compatible with its objectives but the design
should only identify what is essential for meeting the objectives. Within this constraint, maximum latitude should be provided the employee regarding how to do the work. Variances should be controlled as near to the origin as possible. (Workers should be responsible for inspecting their own work.) Employees need to be ready, willing, and able to perform more than one function to provide for a flexible, adaptable organization. (In a Corning Glass subsidiary, employees are now expected to master three job specialties.) Knowledge and information about required actions need to flow freely across departmental boundaries to the person who is responsible for taking the actions. Organizational policies should be consistent with design requirements. (If executives must develop subordinates, the executives’ compensation should reflect their success as developers of their people and organizations.) Objectives should include the promotion of the quality of working life. Wherever possible, the workers themselves should participate in the design process. Moreover, any design of work should have a plan for revision to improve the design.

The New Factory

The sociotechnical approach has led to a revolutionary form of factory. By 1960, adventurous firms such as Nonlinear Systems had substituted small teams of employees to replace assembly lines of workers in assembling electronic equipment. At this same time, Volvo was pioneering changing engine assembly line work into team efforts. In these instances, a team replaced a line of workers for that portion of the line in which a certain amount of the product was assembled. Team members were trained so that they could interchange jobs and take responsibilities for teaching each other. They discussed problems, coordinated their efforts, and made suggestions for improvements and their implementation. The Kalmar plant in Sweden was designed and built with this team approach in mind.

Today, we see whole new factories in which employees are members of teams, some of which are self-managed. Some teams are quite large, approaching a small family business in size. Responsibilities of the team may include everything (including the paperwork) required to obtain an order from a customer, design, assemble, inspect, and ship the product as well as find out how satisfied the customer is with it. The rationale is to convert a large factory which may take months to complete a customer’s order into a collection of small businesses which may provide the customer with a higher quality product in a much shorter time. Obviously, the employees of the new factory of “small businesses” are much more highly trained, involved, and committed to their work than is the traditional assembly line worker in the one large factory.
OTHER EXAMPLES OF CONTINUITY AND CHANGE IN WORK

To complete this review, we mention some less well recognized trends and future developments in the world of work that reflect both continuity and change. Along with the developments already discussed, other examples of continuity and change in the world of work should help human resource executives to look not only at the current scene and near future but at what to expect in the next century.4

The Return to Self-Reliance

We have already noted how organizations grew as the need emerged for coordinating more workers involved with larger projects. While such organizational efforts are commonplace, we are also witnessing a return to independent self-reliance for getting work done.

In the Victorian and Edwardian worlds of a small upper and a large lower class, the few in the former benefitted from the inexpensive, private, domestic, and other support services provided by the latter. Then with the structural shifts at the times of the First and Second World Wars to a greatly enlarged middle class and reduced lower class, such private domestic service tended to disappear. Service work reappeared, however, with the increased substitution of machines for workers in manufacturing and with the rise of public support services. In turn, as the costs of these services have mounted, they have been replaced increasingly by “do it yourself,” self-service, and automation. Already, in Japan by 1990, gasoline stations come equipped with complete computerized washing stalls for one car combining self-service and automation in which the stall moves and the car remains stationary. Airline vouchers have been converted to tickets (as in the newer mass transit railways) which, to open gates, can be inserted into stiles by the boarding passengers instead of being collected by an attendant.

Much of home remodeling often depends on the homeowner doing the work. While we pay a great deal of attention to automation’s effects on the economy, to a considerable degree, doing things for yourself does not show up in the GNP. (If we do our own laundry, the production is not reflected in the GNP, but if we take in others’ laundry to wash for a fee, the production is reflected in the GNP.) A country with a lot of “do it yourself” activities may underestimate its GNP and its resultant wealth in contrast to a country where almost everyone has to use and pay others for services rendered. Self-services have created the demand for developing self-instructional manuals, procedures, and interactive programs.

In America, we have come full-circle, for in its early days the self-reliant hunting and trapping Daniel Boone out at the edge of the frontier

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was glorified and idealized. He cleared his land, grew his crops, hunted and fished for his own food, and built his own log cabin. His equally self-reliant wife made their clothes, grew the garden vegetables, took care of the domestic animals, and maintained the household and family. As neighbors appeared, cooperation with others became possible. More cooperation came when groups of families settled together to organize defenses for war.

The New Leisure Class

Veblen (1973) excoriated the leisure class of the 19th century. Now a new leisure class is emerging—that of the affluent retiree. We do not wish to imply that all retirees are affluent, but many combine the availability of leisure time with savings, pensions, social security, and affordable housing long since purchased. Such a relatively affluent class of senior citizens has emerged with life expectancies into the 80s or beyond. Work, connected with services for them ranging from health to travel, will be expected to continue to expand. Voluntary non-paid service to others will be expected to increase. The end of mandatory retirement should see more senior citizens also continuing in the workplace.

Two Tier Society

Two decades ago (Bass, 1974), I suggested that by the year 2000 there would be a division between the “have’s” and the “have nots.” The “have’s” would have interesting and challenging work; the “have nots” would either be underemployed or employed in uninteresting tasks which lacked challenge. The computer has created the routine work of the data entry clerk as well as the higher level work of the computer systems designer. Needs will continue to increase in HRM to provide opportunities for involvement of the “have nots” in meaningful work. One building services company whose employees are mainly unskilled janitors has already pioneered successfully in this endeavor. The firm provides employees with social incentives, training in how they can do their work better, and an enhanced possibility for a sense of pride in their work.

The industrial revolution sharply reduced the opportunities of the individual craftsman—and the associated opportunity to gain intrinsic satisfaction from one’s work. Today we see in “total quality” programs the effort to restore intrinsic satisfaction to the work force engaged in industrial production by enlisting them fully in the search for quality output and giving them “ownership” and responsibility for the effort.
The Information Revolution

Here we are experiencing an unprecedented development. We are all aware that an information revolution has occurred but its exploitation has just begun. As Cleveland (1985) has noted, information has a number of peculiar characteristics unlike energy or materials which heretofore have been the major inputs and outputs in what is transformed in the work process. Its effect is likely to make the world of work and HRM a world of continuous change because information can replace land, labor, and capital.

Information is expandable (the more we have, the more we use). Information is compressible. (Whole libraries can be packed into a few computer chips). Information is transportable. (Telecommunications substitutes for travel). Information is diffusive, leaky, and shareable; and its effects on HRM are likely to increase exponentially in the forthcoming years.

Diversity and Internationalization

Diversity in the work place is not a new story in the United States. We often lose sight of the extent to which the US factory from 1850 onward became increasingly multiethnic. To the Black Americans who migrated North and West, and the British, Irish, Germans, and Scandinavians was added the vast immigration of Southern and Eastern Europeans.

Ethnic as well as racial segregation in the work place was widely practiced. The labor force in one department, one company, or even one community might be primarily Polish; in another department, company, or community it might be primarily Italian. Earlier migrants from Northwestern Europe and the British Isles served as the management. Such segregation is still seen in the extent that ethnic minorities remain outside the mainstream of line management (Korman, 1988).

Immigration shut down considerably after 1924 until the opening again after 1945 of our doors to Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Southern and Eastern Europe. Coupled with affirmative action, the recent immigration again has greatly increased the diversity of sex, race, and ethnicity at the work place. The diverse profile of the work force’s ethnic and racial groups is different than it was in the first decades of the 20th century, but nevertheless it is again highly diverse.

Continuity and change is reflected in America’s international trade. Internationalism was seen in the nefarious triangular trade of the colonial period which brought slaves from Africa to the West Indies, sugar from the West Indies to New England, and rum from New England to England for cash or barter goods to be used in Africa to purchase slaves (Findley, 1990). The South depended on exchanging its cotton for the
manufactured products of England whose cotton mills depended on the South's supplies (Adams, 1913).

We have now entered an era of globalization of the products of work. While we have not become one world in politics and government, and we still are divided in levels of development, we are rapidly becoming one world in the way we work and in the products of our work. The parts for the assembly of an automobile in Brazil may come from Germany and the United States. A manager in London may directly supervise a project in Naples using electronic mail for instant two-way communication. A teleconference can be held among managers sitting in Japan, Australia, and Mexico.

As a developing country, until 1914, the United States' finances depended strongly on European investors until it became the world's financial powerhouse. In the 1980s the United States returned to the status of a debtor nation. In sum, as colonies of the Old World, influences flowed from the Old to the New on the meaning of work, on equity, and on how to organize and accomplish the work required most effectively. For much of this century, the flow of influence was more from the United States to the Old World. Now we see much more mutual influence occurring.

If we look down the centuries at the meaning and purpose of work, the motivation to work, the concept of equity, and how to organize to get work done, we find that while much has changed, much of HRM today has roots in the distant past. Looking at the past can provide understanding of what lies ahead.

This is some of what we have learned about work so far:

• Some of our tools and methods have not changed much in 5,000 years.
• Although interest in how we work and how we can work better is ancient, the scientific understanding about work lagged far behind the scientific understanding of materials and machines, even through the beginnings of the rationalization of work paralleled the beginnings of the modern physical sciences. We may just be beginning to catch up.
• Once we worked to survive, and many still do, but unlike donkeys who move loads for carrots or to avoid being beaten, we now work much more to maintain our sense of self-worth and social well-being.
• A religious heritage in our culture still moves many of us to want to work rather than remain idle.
• The importance of status connected with work remains as strong as ever. Working with your hands is still regarded as of lower status than is working with your head. It still is regarded by many as unfair to shunt students off into a vocational training program.
which denies them the opportunity for a college education no matter how ill-suited they may be for the latter.

- Chronic unemployment and employment at highly dissatisfying work contributes to ill-health, mental and physical, and many other social problems.
- Neither capitalism nor communism has provided the world with equity. The US chief executive officer earns one hundred times the common laborer’s income; the Russian nomenclatura benefitted similarly in contrast to the Russian street sweepers.
- A radical transformation is occurring in our traditional hierarchical ways of organizing. Semi-autonomous teams may be the wave of the future and represent a return of the craftsmen’s quality and the utility of “doing it yourself.”
- In the global marketplace, with instant information flow, the quality of what we do and how fast we do it remains a larger challenge for HRM than ever before.

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REFERENCES


ENDNOTES

1. This article is drawn from a paper prepared as part of the centennial celebration of the American Psychological Association in 1992 under the auspices of
a committee of the Society for Industrial/Organizational Psychology headed by Ray Katzell. A condensed version was presented at the Academy of Management in Atlanta in August, 1993.

2. Over half of married women in the United States are now in the work force. But those who choose to remain homemakers, in many ways, reflect what we say about gainfully employed workers in the age of artisans. In no way are they conceived to be unemployed shirkers and drifters.

3. MacGregor's (1960) Theory Y is a modern statement of these views, well-known to HRM and is counter to Theory X that people are lazy and must be driven.

4. Human resource managers and others interested in a more detailed exposition about such expected developments about work in the future, should consult Chiara and Lacey (1984).