

# Follow-up

AUTUMN 2000



## “Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose” (The more things change, the more they are the same).

The way we work with or against each other is the predominant interpersonal relationship for each of us, both in and out of the workplace. Our attitude towards others and ourselves may be the biggest single influence on our lives. Even today we can still find many instances in the work place where the attitudes of the “boss” to the “worker” still resonate with a tone of exclusivity and the inherent superiority of the former. A typical conversation might go something like this:

**MANAGER:** “Because if we don’t explain our reasons, they won’t believe we’re acting reasonably. We must give them line and letter for the way we choose to spend or save our money ... we have a right to choose what we will do.”

**OBSERVER:** “It is very strange. I see two groups dependent on each other in every possible way, yet each evidently regarding the interests of the other as opposed to their own, always running each other down. Managers would like their people to be merely tall, huge children ... with a blind kind of obedience.”

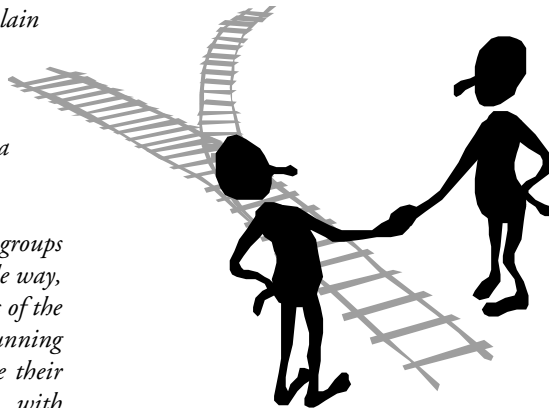
**MANAGER:** “Yes, despotism is the best kind of government for them,” and, “The time is not come for them to have any independent action during business hours.”

**OBSERVER:** “... because you are a manager, dealing with a set of people over whom you have immense power, because your lives and your welfare are so constantly and ultimately interwoven ... we must be mutually dependent.” “What the master is, that will the men be.”

**EMPLOYEE:** “... look how you consider us, writes and talks of us. How you are always right and how we are always wrong.”

But:

“... the strong hand will never do it. Victory and triumph will never do it. Agreeing to make one side unnaturally always and for ever right, and the other side unnaturally always and for ever wrong, will never, never do it. Nor doing nothing will never do it.”



**MANAGER:** “People are to blame for their situation.”

**OBSERVER:** “... without ever seeming to think it is your duty to try to make them different. Could you not ask for input?”

**EMPLOYEE:** “Ask the bosses! They’d tell us to mind our own business and they’d mind theirs. Our business being, you understand, to take the wage and be thankful and their business to beat down to starvation point to swell their profits. ‘State of trade’—just a piece of

employer’s humbug. It’s rate of wages I’m talking about ... it’s their part to beat us down, to swell their fortunes; while it is ours to stand up and fight hard — not for ourselves alone, but for them round about us — for justice and fair play. We help them to make their profits and we ought to help them spend them.”

**MANAGER:** Wishes “the old rules were in force ... just by uniting their weak silly heads they are to rule over the fortunes of those who bring all the wisdom that knowledge and experience and often painful thought and anxiety can give ... we shall have to go cap in hand and humbly ask the ... Union to be so kind as to furnish us with labour at their own price.”



The specialization of “work” to paid employment was a phenomenon of the Industrial Revolution of the 19th Century in Europe. To be “in work” or “out of work” was to be in a definite relationship with some “other” who had control of the means of the productive effort. This concept of work then shifted from the productive effort itself to become the predominant social relationship from the 19th Century to the present.

The term “Industrialism”<sup>1</sup> was introduced as a term by Thomas Carlyle in the 1830’s to indicate this new order of society based on organised mechanical production. Industrial Relations derived mostly in the

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20th Century as a way of describing the organised systems that developed to protect and enshrine the rights of the two sides: the owners of the business and the people who worked for them. The first category broadened over time to include most management positions as opposed to the “workers.” This collective relationship of the individual to their work remains a dominant theme in the world of work.

Sound familiar? In 1855 (yes, 1855!) Elizabeth Gaskell wrote what was known as an “industrial novel” called *North and South*. The vignettes above paraphrase some excerpts

from her novel.<sup>2</sup> Gaskell attempted to suggest that peaceful industrial relations could only be achieved by introducing cooperative behaviour into the public realm. She felt it had to be modeled through actions, not words. Gaskell, through her main characters, Margaret Hale, the parson’s daughter from the South (of England), and Nicholas Higgins, one of the workers in John Thornton’s factory (in the North of England), saw clearly the need for the human connection across class boundaries.

The novel serves as a reminder to those who have power that we are all interdependent. Gaskell foresaw that the mechanization of the human spirit would have a dehumanizing

effect on our societies. Maybe we can still hope that more examples of cooperation will be created where worker and owner sit down together and communicate effectively. Hopefully, it will not take another 150 years before our attitudes of respect for each other can be a normal part of our day-to-day life. As Alphonse Karr said in 1849 in *Les Guêpes*, “The more things change, the more they are the same” (Plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose).

*This article has been extracted from “Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens — two views of the working man and his master in the industrial relations environment of the 1850s” written for the Summer Programme in English Literature at Exeter College, Oxford University, England, July 2000. © Jane Durant. The full text is available from [www.janedurant.com](http://www.janedurant.com).*

1 Williams, Raymond, *Keywords*, 1976, published by HarperCollins, London, revised edition 1983.

2 Gaskell, Elizabeth, *North and South*, 1855, published by Penguin Popular Classics. Available from [www.janedurant.com/bibliography](http://www.janedurant.com/bibliography).

3 Gary Heil, Deborah C. Stephens, Douglas McGregor, Warren G. Bennis, Douglas McGregor, *Revisited: Managing the Human Side of the Enterprise*, 2000, published by John Wiley & Sons, ISBN: 0471314625 — This new book discusses current leadership issues through the lens of McGregor’s ideas. The book offers ten principles for putting his beliefs into practice, from which managers at all levels can learn.

For further reading, see *Douglas McGregor: Theory X and Y revisited*.<sup>3</sup> Douglas McGregor is one of the forefathers of contemporary management thinking. Over 50 years ago, he began investigating the importance of people to business, and he believed something that CEOs today have come to understand: in order to thrive, an organization needs to harness the intelligence, enthusiasm, and commitment of all their employees. McGregor proved that to truly succeed, companies must cultivate an organization that is built on enduring relationships with the workforce and customers.



## Implications Wheel®

For all of us who ever wondered “What the heck are we getting ourselves into?” now there’s a tool to help us find the answers.

Joel Barker — well known for his videos on change and his popularisation of “Paradigms” — now has a new strategic exploration tool that brings great value and foresight to our decision-making processes. Recently Jane and 21 others from North America were certified by Joel as Implications Wheel® trainers.

The Implications Wheel® provides a structure that quickly helps a group uncover the short-term and long-term consequences of decisions. For instance, we might focus on, “What are the positive and negative implications of: launching a new program; a new trend in our business; an internal policy change?”

By the end of the process, the following areas will have been identified:

- **Information Needs** – what we need to know and what questions to ask.

- **Bridges** – possibilities that are highly desirable and how the pathways to them can be enhanced.

- **Barriers** – possibilities that are undesirable and what barriers we can erect to decrease the likelihood of the events occurring.

The Implications Wheel® is a high-tolerance tool providing a willingness just to look around — a key to successful strategic exploration. It is also a multiple-right answer tool offering a range of possibilities. But it is not a decision-making tool, although it very much enhances decision-making. [Contact Jane](mailto:jane@janedurant.com) for more information.

P.S. If you are familiar with the Six Thinking Hats™ you can integrate some of the Hat concepts in the process, too. There were two of us certified as Six Thinking Hats™ trainers at the Implications Wheel® program. Jim and I were able to share some of the Six Thinking Hats™ processes with the group to enhance the “possibilities.”

*Follow-up* is published two or three times a year for clients and friends of Jane Durant. We hope it helps you get better results for yourselves and others. If you would like the opportunity to be part of a future issue, or if you would simply like to receive a copy, please call, e-mail or write me at:

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