

# Corrections in a Changing Environment

*Nothing in progression can rest on its original plan. We might as well think of rocking a grown man in the cradle of an infant.*

Edmund Burke

*So much of what we call management consists in making it difficult for people to work.*

Peter Drucker

## CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

- Identify the dimensions in which the correctional manager's work environment is changing most significantly.
- Review the principal paradigm shifts that are contributing to major change in the management and delivery of correctional services.
- Highlight the importance of flexibility, adaptability, and self-motivation as significant determinants of managerial success.
- Examine correctional management versus noncorrectional management for similarities and differences.
- Review a descriptive scale of organizational "types" and suggest toward which end of the scale corrections tends.
- Introduce the concept of external regulatory pressure.

## DIMENSIONS OF CHANGE

The reality of corrections today is that it is changing. Indeed, first-line managers—those who supervise the people who do the hands-on work—are caught up in a period of bewildering change that some (whether by choice or involuntarily) will not survive. It is a period that is seeing the managerial role transformed in ways that most of today’s working managers could never have anticipated when they entered the workforce. For those entering or progressing through the ranks of correctional management, the changing interactions of many factors will be constant companions throughout their careers.

Major components of that changing environment include the following issues.

### From the Inside

#### Then and Now

It was 1971, and the new case manager walked in the front gate of the penitentiary—looking around with a questioning eye and not a little apprehension. One of the first things he noticed on the high concrete wall was a wire on top, stretching around the entire 26-acre compound. It was the “snitch wire” that would sound an alarm in the control center and all the towers if it was pulled down by an inmate trying to escape. So-called “taut-wire” alarms were the technology of the day when it came to perimeter detection systems. The new case manager was identified visually by a tower officer 30 feet above, and was identified the same way as he left. Personal IDs were the only form of identification used.

Fast forward 40 years. The same person walks into a state-of-the-art high-security prison. On the perimeter there are motion sensors in the ground and detectors woven into the fencing. Microwave detection devices are seen at gates and other points where vibration-sensitive detectors are not appropriate. Key locations on the perimeter and inside the institution are under closed circuit surveillance (some with circuitry that automatically puts the feed from that camera on a monitor if there is any motion in the camera’s field of view). In the gate processing area, he is photographed by an officer in a control center, using the closed circuit camera feed at the checkpoint. The photo will be used to identify him again when he leaves. He is required to provide a fingerprint for a device that will make a comparison with a print provided when he leaves. High technology has reached prisons in force.

## Ongoing Budget Concerns

Budget restrictions in a tight economy continue to exert pressure on correctional agencies to find new ways of performing their mission. Budget pressures have caused states to not open newly constructed facilities due to an inability to afford to hire staff. For instance, not too many years ago the state of Arizona (to name just one) postponed activation of several facilities due to staffing issues. Budget and recruitment problems combined to prevent their use, in spite of the critical overpopulation problems in its other facilities. In some cases, fiscal cut-backs have caused the closure of correctional facilities that operated for years in the seemingly secure knowledge that with a growing prison population the state could “never shut us down.”

## Privatization

Private corrections continues to make inroads into the once-sacred public corrections arena. This text will not address the argued pros and cons of prison privatization. It is only necessary to note that private corrections firms have survived several shakeouts (political, organizational, and financial) and continue to survive in the “marketplace.” While there are continued attempts by organized labor to make inroads in private correctional facilities, for the most part private correctional facilities are nonunionized. And where there are no unions, there are wide open opportunities for the kinds of organizational change this chapter addresses.

Privatization also raises questions in the minds of legislative budget specialists. “If private prisons can be run less expensively, why can’t our prisons be run at a lower cost also?” In some cases, state agencies have been forced to submit “bids” for providing correctional services, which have been evaluated against bids from private organizations.

It should be noted that in a 2002 study by Camp and Gaes of private prisons at both state and federal level, “The private sector experienced significant problems with staff turnover, escapes, and drug use. This should lead prudent legislators to ask: “Is less expensive necessarily better in the long run?”<sup>1</sup> (p.271)

## Technology

New technologies (far beyond those mentioned in “Then and Now”) continue to arrive at a rapid rate. Any visitor to a corrections convention such as those convened by the American Correctional Association will see a multitude of new technologies that purport to make the correctional manager’s job easier. From perimeter security

measures to drug testing equipment, from remote monitoring equipment to new restraint methodology, managers have to decide how new technology will fit into their physical plant, programs, and budget.

## Overcrowding

Prison crowding rates will continue to be high (and likely will continue to rise) in some states. There is little expectation that these pressures are going to abate. As the U.S. prison population grows and public and political pressures continue to advocate for longer and harsher sentences, the job of every administrator will be impacted.

## Program Issues

Demands for more programs, particularly in the area of substance abuse, are likely to increase. As the cost of incarceration climbs, it is sound public policy to seek ways to reduce recidivism and the overall cost of repetitive criminal behavior. With so much criminal activity in the United States linked to drug dependencies, it only makes sense to place a greater emphasis on programs and staffing that help offenders in those areas. How to do that in the face of overcrowding and budget limitations is the challenge.

## Workforce Management

Personnel issues will persist, including recruitment and the loss (by retirement or other avenues) of experienced and effective employees at all levels. Not that losing experienced personnel is a new issue, but at a time when offenders are becoming more difficult and the organizational challenges seem to grow daily, the loss of career employees presents an even more acute problem for the remaining managerial personnel.

## Inmate Management

Inmates seem to grow more difficult to manage as years pass; in particular the issues presented by prison and street gangs are numerous. But the demonstrated needs of many inmates present a real dilemma—if you do not have the resources you cannot give inmates a chance to change, and if you do not provide an opportunity to change, the likelihood grows that inmates will remain in the system and return to it not long after release.

## Litigation

Legal considerations are more and more of a factor in day-to-day prison operations. It is true that prison administrators have complained about the courts for years.

But there is no arguing against the proposition that the cumulative effect of decades of court intervention has imposed a complicated network of restrictions and requirements on prison administrators. And with every new court ruling, day-to-day management becomes more difficult.

These are the major issues fomenting change in many correctional agencies today. They probably reflect what some managers have been going through for some time. They may reflect what is waiting around the corner for the rare agency or institution that has so far escaped such pressures.

## PARADIGM SHIFTS

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The basic paradigms of the generations of line employees who entered the American workforce in the past have come under severe attack. These include such standbys as:

*High-security facilities will always be the heart of the system.* This is clearly no longer true as the value and cost advantages of inmate classification systems continue to be evident. The reality of the high costs of maximum security confinement has been driving agencies toward increased utilization of medium and minimum security facilities, which offer not only cost benefits but the opportunity to provide improved program and service delivery to offenders.

*The way correctional services are currently delivered is the best available.* This is self-evident only to those who have decided to not look for other approaches. Indeed, private corrections has raised this issue quite forcefully, and research is divided on it; the fact is that various cost savings approaches have been introduced and the industry has to deal with it.

*We work in an essential industry that will never close its doors.* Tell that to the former employees of prisons that have been closed or private corrections firms that have not survived for various reasons.

*Corrections professionals will (and should) always control the fundamental way the system is structured.* This premise has been dramatically impacted by judicial involvement and budget necessities. It is also being challenged by private corrections, in that the top executives of

some of the largest private corrections firms have no correctional experience.

*Corrections work means reasonable pay and a decent retirement.* This is belied by the vulnerability of private corrections employees and managers whose pensions are invested in company stock, and the lack of security in what is generally a nonunionized workplace.

*Securing a job with a government agency will lead to employment security.* In law enforcement, things have always seemed particularly secure. Serve 20 or 25 years, reach age 50 or 55, and a defined benefits retirement program is waiting for you. However, today's shrinking government budgets have eroded this security. Now, think of the ebb and flow of private correctional activities—dependent on contract renewals for sustained operations. Think of the aforementioned prisons that have been decommissioned—their staff forced to retire early, transfer, or find other work outside corrections.

All of the foregoing demonstrable paradigm shifts suggest one conclusion—corrections is no longer a static or stable field. It increasingly requires its management ranks to adapt and adjust to shifting priorities and plan for change by being willing to consider new workplace strategies.

For most people, a paradigm can be both a clarifier and an obstacle. Incoming information that fits within an existing paradigm is seen clearly because it confirms expectations. Information that is inconsistent with a paradigm, however, cannot be seen nearly as readily and, in some instances, can hardly be seen at all. These inconsistencies disturb a person's equilibrium with the environment. Possible reactions include fear, uncertainty, frustration, resistance, and the inability to imagine any good resulting from the pressures being experienced.

Correctional managers are prone to resist these paradigm shifts for a number of reasons:

- They are at risk in the process, and this manifests itself as fear and uncertainty.
- They are internal to the organization and cannot step back and objectively view what so intimately involves them.
- They are affected far more than they might ever be able to acknowledge by some long-held paradigms that are presently under concentrated—and largely successful—attack.

- The power of habitual behavior is strong.
- The inertia inherent in any bureaucracy reinforces the natural tendencies to resist at the personal level.

Managers who fear replacement can best ensure their futures by becoming paradigm breakers, refusing to remain satisfied with the status quo for very long. To overcome these forces, it is necessary to start afresh—to work backward from desired outcomes to appropriate processes—ignoring past practices to the extent possible. At times it is necessary to deliberately think along different paths, to deliberately turn away from what is known and follow a line of thought that feels wrong and causes discomfort.

In some cases, assistance from outside the organization, whether from professional consultants or others, can be helpful. These resources can force those in the organization to get out of their comfort zone where creative solutions are often found.

## MOTIVATION AND EMPOWERMENT

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Motivation is a key element in successful supervisory performance. A great many correctional functions (at both the line and supervisory level) depend on individual initiative and insight into human behavior. But because of the ways in which the supervisory role is changing and because of the dramatic changes in the field of corrections that are altering that role, the average supervisor can be caught in a classic motivational crunch.

Supervisors are susceptible to the same negative morale influences as the nonsupervisory staff—pressures to do more with less, deal with more intractable inmates, manage with the courts looking over one shoulder, and many others. Yet managerial personnel are expected to be sufficiently self-motivated to help lift the line employees' level of motivation.

There is no question that as the person most responsible for the output of the work group, the supervisor can have a significant effect on the group's outlook and effort. It is important that the supervisor does everything possible to be "up" when the group members are "down." This leader must be a cheerleader at a time when the employees might feel there is nothing to cheer about. Sometimes this seems as though one is expected to put up a false front for the employees.

Why, one might ask, should the supervisor not exhibit signs of the same frustration and lack of confidence in the future that the employees feel? After all, in today's

fiscal environment the supervisor may be called on to undertake tasks that were never before part of the role. These may include deciding how to curtail programs that heretofore were thought untouchable, or deciding how to implement reductions in force or even facility closures. Their burdens may indeed be far greater than those of the line staff. Simply stated, if the supervisor's behavior reflects only the doom and gloom the staff members may feel, they themselves will be dramatically affecting employee behavior—and not in a positive direction.

Improving morale is an uphill struggle in many correctional settings. Morale and motivation are, of course, complex considerations that at any time can depend on a variety of factors. But a great deal of what is related to the supervisor's ability to self-motivate will depend on that individual's personal relationship with the realities of the job. If the supervisor genuinely likes his or her work and finds satisfaction and fulfillment in necessary supervisory tasks, that will serve as a positive example for the group members. However, some supervisors have been lured into the role primarily by title, status, pay, and perks (as opposed to an innate enjoyment of the work). In all probability, such a manager will experience problems dealing with the challenges of the shrinking organization and the flattening of the management structure.

In management circles and in the literature, a recent trend has been to base supervisory strategies on "empowerment." Indeed, empowerment is a key element in obtaining the most from a given group of employees—of maintaining and boosting their morale and fostering initiative. And yet in almost every respect empowerment is no more than that old standby, delegation. The problem has been that most of what has been called delegation was not delegation at all. So delegation—as both a term and an observed management practice—has acquired a tarnish that no amount of polishing can remove. Perhaps that is why empowerment is now used to describe these processes.

What is important is that any group's leader must truly be empowering in his or her relationships with employees—delegating properly to the fullest extent of his or her capacities. In these days when management structures are becoming leaner and leaner, empowerment is essential. Empowerment stands as the only practical way to expand and extend the leader's effectiveness and to pursue the constant improvement that is expected in today's correctional workplace. When it comes to seriously improving the ways in which the group's work is accomplished, empowerment acknowledges the fact that no one knows the details of the work better than

the person who performs it every day. This is one of the themes to which this text will return repeatedly.

## PROCESS VERSUS ENVIRONMENT

This text addresses a number of issues that distinguish corrections from other professions, at both the macro- and micro-levels. And yet the essential premise of this text is that management in corrections is the management of people. There are certain core skills and traits that managers can use in all types of organizational settings, including corrections. But for the questioning reader, that assertion alone may be insufficient. So the opposing sides of an age-old argument are ready for examination:

It doesn't matter how well it worked anywhere else,  
it won't work here—this is corrections.

*versus*

Good management is good management no matter  
where it's practiced; what works elsewhere will work  
in a correctional organization as well.

### From the Inside

#### **Real Careers in Corrections**

- A successful businessman takes over the management of a major correctional operation for a state government.
- A former case manager is director of a major prison industries program.
- A retired U.S. Marine lieutenant colonel is the chief correctional supervisor of a major federal penitentiary.
- A financial manager heads up a private corrections firm.
- A former recreation supervisor is an associate warden for custody in a maximum-security penitentiary.
- A psychiatrist from private practice manages a high-security unit in a maximum-security penitentiary.
- A governor selects the chief of police of the state's largest city to head the department of corrections.
- Successively, an attorney and psychologist serve as directors of the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Since this text discusses supervision in the correctional setting, it would seem sensible to explain the view that governs the approach taken by this text. Should one focus on the management process, thus agreeing that “good management is good management no matter where it’s practiced,” or should one give the most weight to the environment, agreeing that correctional operations are sufficiently different to warrant a completely different approach to management?

Many correctional managers are clearly divided on the fundamental issue of process versus environment. Often, all organizational considerations are split into these two distinct categories, which are assumed to be mutually exclusive in some way. These considerations can be condensed to *corrections versus “industry,”* with the latter category including manufacturing, commercial, financial, retail, and all other organizations not specifically devoted to correctional operations. Further, in this simplistic comparison, “industry” frequently becomes something of a dirty word: “After all, *we* deal in human life.”

This debate has been refocused to some extent by the advent of private correctional firms, which manage confinement facilities from the perspective of the business world rather than that of some level of government. Private corrections is not a new phenomenon; for many years private firms have operated community treatment centers housing minimum-security inmates. But there has been continued expansion over the recent two decades of private firms into more traditional confinement facilities. Private management of low- and medium-security offenders presents a novel situation for public sector correctional managers. For the first time, the precept of uniqueness is being seriously challenged. Privatization of correctional facilities, it can be argued, validates at least part of the “process” viewpoint.

## THE NATURE OF THE CORRECTIONAL ORGANIZATION

That the process-versus-environment argument exists is not at all surprising when one considers the evolution and character of the traditional correctional organization. The role of corrections as it is known today is largely a product of the past 100 years or so. Many correctional agencies of the early 20th century provided only custodial care in a high-security setting. In those days, for all practical purposes, there was only one occupation: the custodial (or security) service. The mission of the organization was security, and essentially the only management activity was the operation of what was in

those days called the “guard” force. No classification staff, no education programs, no vocational training, little if any recreation opportunities—in short, hard time.

Some aspects of corrections involved providing inmate labor to the private sector for agriculture or manufacturing employment. However, that practice was discontinued because of serious abuses that developed over the years. In that early era, for the most part, little thought was given to operating a correctional agency “like a business.” In the 1990s, spurred by federal legislation, there was a small resurgence in several states in the use of inmate labor for private industrial work projects. But criticism of this program centers on the assertion that prison labor infringes on the employment opportunities of civilian workers, so this trend is not widespread. Consequently, management of prison factories can generally be considered as a subset of general prison management.

Because prisons are the most dramatic and visible symbol of corrections, the discussion will focus on them for a moment. The modern correctional facility is vastly different from its counterpart of the past century, or even the prison of 50 years ago. The major purpose of a correctional institution used to be custodial confinement with only basic services and very few, if any, self-improvement programs. That is now the primary mission of only a few ultra-maximum-security facilities where a relatively small number of extraordinarily dangerous inmates are held. In the last 30 to 40 years, the role of the correctional institution evolved into that of an organization which, while still committed to public safety and institutional security, has an obligation to society. That obligation is to offer programs and services that inmates can use to help them live lawfully upon release, if they so choose.

Correctional agencies of the past had a unique mission, which they fulfilled in a simple, one-dimensional manner that had no parallel in other kinds of organizations. (An exception might be the large residential mental health facilities operated by states until the 1970s.) Correctional officers supervised food service, laundry, and other functions. Those support activities were seen as an extension of the custodial function, rather than as separate disciplines. The only similarity with the activities of most other organizations was the direct supervision of the correctional officers who supervised the inmates—the basic process of getting work done through people.

However, the modern correctional setting is far different from the one-dimensional situation of the past.

In today's confinement facilities, there is a wide variety of services and programs provided and numerous complex and sophisticated specialized skills required. In the community setting, job training and placement, housing, drug treatment, and other programs have to be organized and overseen. Also, a great many "business" functions, which are not specifically part of corrections but which are critical to the functioning of any agency, are present in today's correctional setting.

Correctional industries certainly provide an excellent example of this new situation, and it is clear that in many other respects the correctional institution of today very much resembles a business. Nowhere is this seen more than in the relatively new area of private corrections, to which the management principles of this text are equally applicable. While effective management always was important, it has never been more so as modern correctional settings are more crowded, more complex, and more subject than ever before to public and legal scrutiny. The argument about corrections versus private industry is frequently articulated along functional lines. One way of understanding how this happens is by looking at the occupational and training backgrounds of those employed in the field.

Many correctional employees did not start out with the goal of working in corrections. They were originally trained in other kinds of organizations or educated in schools where they were concerned with some noncorrectional specialty. These people, essential to the operation of a correctional agency, include counselors, mental health and medical personnel, accountants, personnel specialists, maintenance staff, food service workers, computer specialists, and others. While acquiring their skills in school and perhaps later practicing them in other settings, these individuals may have had no thought of applying these skills in corrections until an opportunity to do so arose. Many workers see their functions as cutting horizontally across organizational lines and applying equally to corrections, hospitals, manufacturing, or most any other field. The movement of these specialists into correctional management ordinarily requires them to acquire more general knowledge about the field of corrections, in addition to developing specific management skills.

Other corrections professionals, however, do come into the field as a result of a specific, early career choice. College programs in criminal justice, corrections, and sociology often serve to feed entry-level correctional positions. Courses in management and exposure to correctional management systems through internships

may be included in these academic programs. In many correctional agencies, career ladders are established that allow these individuals to build on their academic training. This progression also involves the acquisition of specific, separate management skills tailored to the correctional environment. This is a process that can produce managers who think their field is unique and requires unique skills.

Part of the process-versus-environment argument seems to stem from the differing background and experience of these two categories of personnel, as well as the vertical versus horizontal view of organizations. Employees whose careers have noncorrectional origins may have applied their education and training in other lines of work. This can reinforce the horizontal view of organizations and encourage the belief that basic skills are transportable across industry lines. For example, a nurse in a community hospital may easily be recruited to work in a correctional infirmary, and later move to a position in the private sector working for a managed care organization. In contrast, an employee whose education and training was tailored toward the specifics of the correctional environment may have worked in other kinds of organizations, but often in entirely different capacities. Consider, for instance, the person who leaves a job in retail sales to go to college, and obtains a degree in public administration with a concentration in criminal justice. The person eventually takes a position in a correctional setting as a case manager and, over time, progresses into mid- and upper-level management. This path strongly reinforces a vertical view of organizations because the skills involved are specific to that kind of organization and are not readily transportable across industry lines. In looking back at his or her career, this individual likely may not view that early job experience in the retail field as part of their "real career" in corrections.

Certainly there are some differences between management in correctional organizations and management in other organizations. But once the differences have been explored, one finds that at the individual managerial level, the same core skills and talents can be applied in a variety of organizational environments, including corrections.

## **THE REAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN AND AMONG ORGANIZATIONS**

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Organizations come into being to fill certain needs. Business and government organizations of all kinds—including those with a correctional mission—continue

to exist because they provide something people want or need. This truth is obvious in the business world; food wholesalers and grocery stores exist because people need food. While it may be less obvious, it is no less true that corrections exists because society has a need. It demands that certain types of criminal offenders be separated from other citizens because they are dangerous or because they will not stop committing crimes. Other segments of corrections (such as probation, parole, and halfway houses) likewise fill societal needs that have less to do with security than with providing supervision and structure in the community.

It should follow that if a set of needs can be fulfilled in a number of different ways, the organizations that do the best job of responding to those needs will be the ones most likely to continue to exist. This is especially true in manufacturing, in which competition is keen and the organization that can meet public needs with the best product at the best price will stand the best chance of success. And while among correctional organizations the competition to fill needs is less evident, it is nevertheless there. This is best seen in the ongoing development of various intermediate sanctions (e.g., punishments more stringent than probation and less restrictive than correctional confinement). It also is seen in the emergence of private correctional operations, which claim to be able to provide some correctional services at least as well and at less cost than government agencies.

The basic error in considering correctional management as “different” is the classification of organizations by type. Assigning organizations to categories such as government, manufacturing, retail, commercial, financial, and so on, does not necessarily mean managerial traits are similarly distinct. Indeed, such classification is simply not sufficient to allow one to judge the applicability of supervisory practices across organizational lines. Rather, it is productive to examine organizations for the degree to which certain kinds of activities are present. Disregarding organizational labels, look at the processes applied within organizations and the kinds of actions required to manage these processes. Look not at what managers do but rather at how they do it.

## Two Theoretical Extremes

In his book, *New Patterns of Management*, Rensis Likert developed a view of organizations based on how they do the things they do.<sup>2</sup> Likert organized a great deal of his theoretical thinking around the notion of a “scale of organizations,” running from one extreme type to another.

At one end of Likert’s scale is a type he called the “Job Organization System.” This system evolved over time and applies to industries in which repetitive work is dominant, such as the many manufacturing industries that rely on conveyor belts, assembly lines, and automatic and semiautomatic processes. This system is characterized by an advanced and detailed approach to management. Jobs lend themselves to a high degree of organization, and the entire system can be controlled fairly closely. If, for example, a manager is involved in assembly line manufacturing, it is possible to break down most activity into specifically described tasks and defined in great detail. The manager can schedule output, deciding to make so many units per day and gearing the input speed of all available resources accordingly. A great amount of structure and control is possible. All this calls for a certain style of supervision, a style specifically suited to the circumstances.

At the other end of Likert’s scale is the “Cooperative Motivation System.” This system evolved in work environments where variable forms of work dominate. Management is considerably less refined in this system. Jobs are not readily definable in detail, and specific controls over organizational activity are not possible to any great extent.

In many respects a correctional institution is better described by the Cooperative Motivation System, despite its apparent regimentation and reliance on policy. Yes, department-level managers can make reasonable estimates based on experience. Most institutions develop post (i.e., job) orders for each post that outline the major duties to be performed at that post. It certainly would be possible to specify some correctional tasks with quantitative measures, such as performing not less than five cell searches each day or writing at least 10 classification reports per week, but it remains difficult to schedule “output.” Within the Cooperative Motivation System, close control is a much less prominent feature than in the Job Organization System. This matches more closely the variable demands and contingencies of the correctional world.

What makes these differing organizational systems work? Likert contends that the Job Organization System depends largely on economic motives to keep the wheels turning. That is, everything is so controlled that the only remaining requirement is for people to perform the prescribed steps. Therefore, what keeps the wheels turning are the people who show up for work primarily because they are paid to do so. These people are not expected to exhibit very much judgment; they need only follow instructions.



In the Cooperative Motivation System, however, there are far less rigid controls on activities. Jobs cannot be defined down to the last detail. Activities and outputs cannot be accurately predicted or scheduled. The nature of the work cannot be depended on to conform to a particular formula. In the Cooperative Motivation System it is not enough that employees simply show up because they are being paid. This system depends to a much larger extent on individual effort and motivation to keep the wheels turning. Clearly the Cooperative Motivation System is closer to the situation most correctional managers encounter than the Job Organization System.

Examined in their extremes, therefore, the Job Organization System and the Cooperative Motivation System can be seen to differ in several important ways. However, the most important difference lies in the role of the human element—the part that people play in each kind of system. Under the conditions of the Job Organization System, the system controls the people and essentially drags them along. Under the Cooperative Motivation System, however, the people control the system and keep it moving. Certainly this is true in corrections, where many staff work in locations some distance from their supervisor and are expected to exercise a certain amount of independent judgment.

Regardless of an organization's unit of output—whether automobiles, toasters, or cell searches—one needs to look at the amount of structure that is both required and possible, and at the variability of the work itself. There are few, if any, pure organizational types. As already suggested, an example of the Job Organization System would be the automated manufacturing plant in which every employee is a servant of a mechanized assembly line. At the other end of the scale, an example of the Cooperative Motivation System at work would be the jack-of-all-trades, odd-job service in which any type of task may come up at any time.

Within corrections, the custodial or security department of a confinement facility or the work of a probation officer may very much typify a Cooperative Motivation System situation. In prison, staff in a variety of posts throughout the institution deal with inmates with widely varying needs. They may encounter everything from a drunk inmate, to an attempted suicide, to an escape attempt, to an inmate assault—each requiring a different response. When supervising offenders in the outside community, an immense degree of latitude must be given to the individual probation officer in determining how to guide and direct an offender on his or her caseload. Even though there are some prescribed tasks associated with each of these jobs, there is a wide range

of discretion in how they are performed. Importantly, a wide range of possible intervening events occurs out of sight of any supervisor and requires independent judgment and action.

## The Real World: Parts of Both Systems

Most organizations possess elements of both the Job Organization System and the Cooperative Motivation System. In prison, for example, running a cell house is only generally predictable and does not lend itself well to a rigid routine. In contrast, some elements of the inmate booking process certainly are amenable to an assembly line approach. Managing an offender caseload in a halfway house requires far more latitude than managing the personnel office of a large probation system.

So it seems that the organization of the modern correctional system leans toward the description of the Cooperative Motivation System. There are, however, internal exceptions and differences related to size and degree of structure. A small institution, for instance, may demonstrate many features of the Cooperative Motivation System. On the other hand, while security functions involve the kind of remote supervision and independent functioning consistent with the Cooperative Motivation System, a large facility will include some departments organized along Job Organization System lines. For example, the records department of any reasonably sized correctional agency entails many highly procedural functions. There is a specific method prescribed for calculating the length of an inmate's sentence. Searches of inmates and their property generally proceed in the same fashion each time. The same people repeat the same tasks day after day. Food service in a large correctional facility with many satellite food service locations may actually include an assembly line process and actual meal delivery by food cart. The principles of this kind of work activity are essentially the same as those for product assembly lines in manufacturing. A large prison's laundry certainly will include repetitive tasks that are highly procedural, and repetitive functions may be found in many other departments as well.

## Implications for Supervision

Given the foregoing, what are the implications for supervision in the real world?

## Environment and Management Style

The concept of Likert's Job Organization System tends considerably toward production-centered management.

The essential interest is in getting the work done, and the people who do the work are more or less swept along with the system. This system is rigid, and the people who keep the system going need only show up for work. On the other hand, the concept of the Cooperative Motivation System suggests people-centered management. People—the employees—are needed to do the work, and more is required of them than simply showing up. They have to take initiative, perhaps make individual decisions and render judgments, and in general must accept a measure of responsibility for keeping the system moving. Nowhere is this truer than in prisons, where correctional officers operate semi-independently in supervising large numbers of inmates in housing units or activity areas.

It is perhaps unfortunate that businesses that evolved along the lines of the Job Organization System sometimes tend to overemphasize production while largely ignoring people. Under the Cooperative Motivation System, however, it is not so easy to ignore people (even by default) since the organization may function poorly or, in the extreme, not function at all if people are not cooperative. To complicate the situation further, criminal offenders are consummately skilled at exploiting differences among staff for illicit, disruptive, or dangerous purposes. This makes it all the more important that staff work cooperatively and within established policies, however broad or narrow these are.

Decision making can be vastly different for a supervisor in the Job Organization System as opposed to one in the Cooperative Motivation System. In the former, it is more likely to be procedural, with many decisions being made “by the book.” In the latter, specific procedures often do not exist (and cannot exist because of the variability of the work), making it necessary to rely heavily on individual judgment. This certainly would be the case for a correctional watch commander, who may be responsible for a sprawling institution and the lives of hundreds of staff and thousands of inmates involved in a variety of activities. Policy and procedure may abound on the shelf back in the office, but when confronted with an angry group of inmates in the dining room, individual judgment (described in the Cooperative Motivation System and leavened by some personal courage) is the operative factor.

### **Where Does Your Department Fit?**

Decide for yourself what kind of organization you work in. Does it look like a Job Organization System or does it more resemble the Cooperative Motivation System? How your department measures up in terms of certain

essential characteristics will have a strong influence on the style of supervision necessary to ensure proper functioning. Examine the following characteristics:

*Variability of Work.* The more the work is varied in terms of the different tasks to be encountered, the length of time they take, and the procedures by which they are performed, then the more difficult it is to schedule and control. Tasks that are unvarying and repetitive require supervisory emphasis on scheduling inputs and resources. Work that is variable requires supervisory emphasis on controlling the activities of the people who do the work.

*Mobility of Employees.* If all the employees work in the same limited area and usually remain within the supervisor’s sight, the supervisor need not be concerned with certain control activities. However, as employees become more mobile and move about in larger areas, there is a need for the supervisor to pay more attention to people who are out of sight much of the time.

*Degree of Professionalism.* There can be a vast difference in supervisory style depending on whether the majority of employees supervised are unskilled, semiskilled, or skilled. Many components of a correctional system are staffed with educated professionals who are able, and expected, to exercise independent judgment. Managing the activities of professionals is considerably different from managing the activities of unskilled workers whose primary responsibility lies in following specific instructions.

*Definability of Tasks.* The more structure possible in work roles, the more rigid the style of supervision may be. For instance, the job of a sorter in a large correctional laundry may be defined in every last detail in a few specific steps on a job description. Since the job is completely definable, the supervisor need only make sure a well-trained worker is assigned and then follow up to see that the work is accomplished. However, any correctional supervisor who has attempted to write a job description for a line correctional officer will tell a different tale. Because of task variability, the need for independent judgment, and other factors, the job description for the officer is not written as easily as that of the laundry sorter. Similarly, a parole agent in the field much of the time is not easily

supervised. Primary duties involved may range from helping an offender with a job interview, to giving an alcohol sobriety test, to arresting a parole violator. The duties of these latter two employees are considerably less definable, so there is likely to be more need for the supervisor to provide case-by-case guidance when necessary and also to rely on the individual employee's independent judgment.

In general, despite the many rules and regulations involved in day-to-day operations, the organization of the modern correctional facility leans toward Likert's Cooperative Motivation System, since the activity of a correctional organization is quite variable and centered around people. However, elements of the Job Organization System must be recognized as being present in the institution's policies, procedures, and post orders. This suggests that within any particular institution there may be the need for different supervisory approaches according to the nature of the functions being supervised.

## A WORD ABOUT QUALITY

There is always room in a discussion such as this for the consideration of quality. Consider again the contention that all organizations exist to serve people's needs. It follows that quality should always be a primary consideration regardless of the form of the organization's output. Businesses basically organized along the lines of the Job Organization System tend to have frequent built-in quality checks at points in the process. As many manufacturers have discovered, however, quality must be built into a product—it cannot be inspected into it.

Organizations tending toward the Cooperative Motivation System also have their quality checks, but these are less numerous and less specific. In the kind of organization that relies heavily on individual enthusiasm and motivation, there is considerably more reliance on the individual employee to produce acceptable quality.

## EXTERNAL PRESSURE: AN AREA OF INCREASING CONCERN

The "corrections-is-different, period" argument generally does not succeed in differentiating correctional management from management in other disciplines. However, there are some legitimate differences, in the form of outside pressure, that are making themselves increasingly felt in corrections.

This is not to assert that corrections has a monopoly on external pressure. Every work organization that serves people in any way experiences pressure from outside, even if that pressure is as basic as competition from others in the same business. Corrections cannot even claim the burden of maximum external regulation. Other businesses such as hospitals, insurance, banking, and public utilities are highly regulated as well.

But in some cases prisons and entire correctional systems are under strict court supervision that governs many details of facility and agency operations. Growing judicial intervention, increasing financial constraints, and mounting public scrutiny of correctional operations are realities for today's correctional manager. They combine to create a unique, frequently high-pressure work environment. This interventionist environment began to emerge in the mid-1970s and there is every reason to believe it will continue in the early part of the 21st century.

Some undeniable forces have entered the field of corrections and are reshaping the way supervisors do their jobs:

- The overall cost of sustaining correctional operations continues to rise as the incarcerated population in the United States grows. Correctional budgets challenge (and in some states eclipse) demands by education and other vital public services for scarce funds.
- There is a continued public expectation for high-quality correctional operations and programs (such as drug treatment and literacy training) despite constant pressure to contain or reduce costs.
- Many segments of the public are beginning to voice objections to programs that are believed by corrections administrators to be valuable but which segments of the public view as unnecessary or even as "perks."
- Privatization, once limited to community corrections, is becoming increasingly accepted for higher security inmates. This places a form of competitive pressure on public sector corrections as well as pressure from employee unions, which fear a loss of members to these generally nonunion organizations.
- Burgeoning rules and regulations have made some aspects of correctional management considerably more difficult and complex.

The reality is that the desired outcomes—public safety and humane treatment of inmates—are often attained only by creatively finding a way through these and other obstacles.

## YOUR SUPERVISORY APPROACH

One should not be misled by what seem to be differences between types of organizations. Correctional agencies are indeed unique in terms of the output they produce, but they are not necessarily unique in terms of the management processes employed. Again, examine

your own department—how it is put together and especially the variability of the work and the degree of structure required. To a large extent, a manager's approach to supervision will be determined not by the notion that "this is a correctional operation, not a factory," but rather by the kinds of employees supervised and the nature of their job responsibilities.

### Ex Er Cis E I - 1: Where Does Your Department Fit?

Take a few minutes to "rate" your department according to the four characteristics discussed in this chapter: (1) variability of work, (2) mobility of employees, (3) degree of professionalism, and (4) definability of tasks. Although this assessment will necessarily be elementary, it may nevertheless suggest which end of the "scale of organizations" your department tends toward. Rate each characteristic on a continuous scale from 0 to 10. The following guides provide the ends and the approximate middle of the scale for each characteristic.

#### **Variability of Work**

- 0 = No variability. Work can be scheduled and output predicted with complete accuracy.
- 5 = Average condition. Workload predictability is reasonable. Advance task schedules remain at least 50 percent valid.
- 10 = Each task is different from all others. Workload is unpredictable and task scheduling is not possible.

#### **Mobility of Employees**

- 0 = No mobility. All employees remain in sight in the same physical area during all hours of work.
- 5 = Average condition. Most employees work within or near the same general area or can be located within minutes.
- 10 = Full mobility. All employees continually move about the facility as part of normal job performance.

#### **Degree of "Professionalism" (by virtue of degree, licensure, certification, or some combination of these)**

- 0 = No "professionals" are employed in the department.
- 5 = About half of the employees are "professionals."
- 10 = All the employees are "professionals."

#### **Definability of Tasks**

- 0 = All jobs are completely definable in comprehensive job descriptions and written procedures.
- 5 = Average condition. There is about 50 percent definability of jobs through job descriptions and procedures.
- 10 = No specific definability. No task procedures can be provided and job descriptions must be limited to general statements.

Take the average of your "ratings." This may provide a rough idea of whether your department leans toward the Job Organization System (an average below 5) or the Cooperative Motivation System (an average above 5).

#### **Question:**

Assuming your "ratings" of the four characteristics are reasonable indications of the nature of your department, what can you say about your supervisory approach relative to each characteristic?

### Ex Er Cis E I - 2: Suggestion for a Additional a ctivity

Try the previous exercise (1-1) with a small group of other managers (perhaps three or four) who are familiar with your department's operations. Try to arrive at a group rating for each characteristic.

### Ex Er Cis E 1-3: r esponding to external pressure

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Due to recent developments in the private sector, it is no longer a given that publicly managed prisons are the only option for government. Private corrections has highlighted the issues of cost-effectiveness, quality program delivery, and employee job security. Management in both the public and private corrections arena is impacted by these changes in many ways.

Discuss the following questions:

1. Are there other pressures (beyond those mentioned in this chapter) that create a need to reexamine underlying paradigms, and if so, what are they?
2. How has private corrections impacted the paradigms under which many of today's correctional managers operate?
3. Why do you believe private correctional facilities may be more cost effective, and if you believe it to be the case, what managerial benefits do private corrections present?
4. In your view, are there ways that corrections can implement new management paradigms without adverse political impact, and if so, how?

### NOTES

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1. Stohr, M. K. and Walsh, A. *Corrections—The Essentials*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2012.
2. Likert, R. *New Patterns of Management*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961.

