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Human Resources Development

CASE STUDY

8

Qualifying a manager

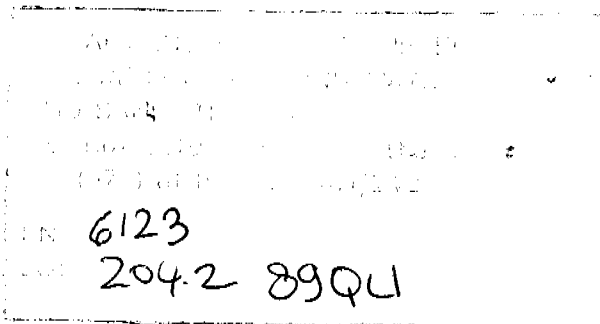
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Qualifying a manager

How the British water industry set up its Senior Management Development Programme to overcome a shortage of managerial staff.

A Human
Resources
Development
Case Study
No: 8 in a series



Foreword

The World Health Organization (WHO) and the Swedish International Development Authority (SIDA) are jointly producing a thematic series of case studies focussing on Human Resources Development.

Our intention is to both illustrate and document various methods, used in different parts of the world, which aim at improving human performance.

Activities and projects selected for this series are all of an innovative nature. They show that there are usually a variety of methods other than classical classroom training to help people do their jobs better.

While country reports and project descriptions are common, one seldom finds detailed descriptions of techniques used. "What was done?" is answered more often than "How was it done?" In this series of case studies we aim to provide the reader with a total perspective of what was done, how it was done, why it was done and an assessment of its effectiveness.

These collected experiences should give the reader ideas, which can be adapted to improve other activities and projects in his or her own environment. We believe this series will be a source of inspiration for action and deliberate change.

This specific case was suggested by a British company, *Water Training*. Its former Senior Management Development Programme (SMDP) Director, Annette Allport, submitted a text which forms the basis for this case study. Additional information was collected during a field visit to England in March 1988. Interviews with SMDP participants and executives and managers in several water authorities also make up part of this text. We thank everyone for their contribution, and Mrs Annette Allport in particular.

Alice Petrén, 25 April, 1989

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Les opinions exprimées dans les documents par des auteurs cités nommément n'engagent que lesdits auteurs.

Contents

Manager shortage follows reshuffle	6
Ten new authorities to control full water cycle	8
Survey identifies areas of concern	10
Training must be directly relevant	12
The SMDP phase by phase	14
Tough start at training centre	16
Simulation tests ability of trainees	22
Changes to SMDP over the years	24
Parent of other training projects	26
Lessons learned	28
Other case studies	32

Summary

Manager shortage follows reshuffle

Lack of middle managers

Being a skilful designer of water supply systems does not imply that one is also a good leader of the team constructing it. Or, being a good mechanic does not necessarily mean that one is good at planning the work load in the maintenance workshop. Managers in the water supply sector are often selected because of their high technical competence. Their ability to cope with managerial responsibilities is assumed to be inborn. What is often overlooked is that a supervisory position involves an increase of managerial tasks and a decrease of technical ones.

This was a problem England had to confront in 1974 when hundreds of small water authorities were merged to form ten big entities. Managers who were used to leading small, single service units found themselves having to manage multi-functional organizations with a big staff. Although England is a highly industrialized country and has a long tradition of management, the reorganizers of the British water industry did not recognize the fact that good technicians are not equivalent to good managers. The transformation of the industry created a whole series of middle management positions, for which there were no adequately trained personnel.

The Senior Management Development Programme (SMDP) was set up to help solve this problem. It is a programme which annually trains 24 middle level managers from the industry. The training qualifies them to take on senior positions in the future. Chief Executives partly design and partly participate in the programme, which means that the trainees are given full support to undertake new activities after their training.

The programme runs over a period of six to seven months and is divided into several sections. Its main components are two two-week modules of management preparation at a training centre; project work at the home utility; and a simulation exercise dealing with a real life situation. The modules at the training centre are full-time while the project work takes place alongside daily duties

back at the home utility. The programme aims at self-analysis and training in teamwork and in dealing with people. The participants get to know their management styles, how to change and improve and how others perceive them. The goal is also to broaden the participants' perspectives of running a water utility and of the water industry. As participants are technically oriented, the SMDP aims at providing them with a variety of tools for managerial activities like planning, problem solving, decision-making and leading others. Another aim is to get participants to draw up plans to solve urgent problems in the industry.

Training in teamwork

The SMDP has led to a tremendous change in attitudes within the water industry. Managerial skills and development are today given high priority. "It has provided wider visions and a different workstyle to an industry where the staff has earlier been 'tunnelvisioned'", says Mr Jim Carter, Executive Director of South Staffordshire Waterworks. He adds to the list of benefits: "The SMDP enables managers to deal with others and to realize how it can be a strength that people are different."

Change in attitudes

The British water industry has become more efficient and cost-effective partly thanks to the SMDP's provision of managers. The Yorkshire Water Authority, for example, reduced its staff from 6,500 to 5,000 and thus trimmed costs. Through the simulation exercise, which touches on finance, personnel, decision-making and operational issues, managers are trained to tackle various acute problems. During the earlier SMDPs, reducing staff and taking on increased responsibilities were pressing problems. In recent years, commercial issues and customer-orientation have come into the foreground.

Industry more efficient

Already after its second year (1983/84), the SMDP acquired the status of flagship event for management development in the industry. To really instil the management concepts among a broader group of staff, many authorities have run their own "mini SMDPs". ♦

Setting the scene

Ten new authorities to control full water cycle

Culture shock

The history of water supply and sewage disposal in England dates back two hundred years. Today therefore, the British people are used to and expect effective water systems and service. Over 99% of the population is connected to a public supply of safe potable water and over 95% are connected to a sewerage system.

Prior to 1974 water undertakings in England numbered 197 water supply boards, 1,500 sewage disposal authorities and 29 river authorities. In 1974 these were combined to form ten regional water authorities. These became responsible for managing the complete water cycle and were based on a river basin management concept. In addition to these, there are still 28 small companies which deliver only water.

The transformation of the British water industry created large organizations which would deal with the full range of water and waste water services. This change had a profound effect on the managers within the industry.

Managers who had been used to leading small and fairly specialized units suddenly found themselves in charge of a lot more functions and having to manage an increased number of employees. The staff who had hitherto felt a sense of belonging now faced big systems of financial and technical services and felt that they were simply a small cog in a vast bureaucratic organization.

Little recognition was given to the culture shock felt by small independent units after being amalgamated into large organizations, nor to the need for a very different calibre of leaders capable of managing the industry through this significant change. Management development had not been given any priority before the reorganization. Where it did exist it was unstructured and concentrated more on providing knowledge than on developing real managerial skills and changing attitudes.

In 1980, the problem of the dire shortage of well developed managers was acute in all of the

ten water authorities. The Chief Executives therefore decided to undertake a survey of the managerial situation in their authorities to determine what should be done. Time had come for improvements. The first SMDP was run in 1982/83.

The Chief Executives of the water industry together with a private company, *Water Training*, have designed the basic model for the programme and adapt it each year to meet new requirements of the industry. The big issue for the 1990's is the privatization of the British water industry. This means a need for even more efficient workstyles and commercially-oriented managers who will have to satisfy not only customers but also shareholders. ♦

Survey initiated

WATER AUTHORITIES IN ENGLAND AND WALES



In 1974 several hundred water undertakings in England were combined to form ten regional water authorities.

Part 1

Survey identifies areas of concern

Narrow outlook

A group of randomly selected senior managers conducted the survey of the ten authorities. They questioned a broad group of managers about their educational background, professional qualifications, work experience and the type and duration of any management development experience. They also investigated the authorities' training capacity and manpower development systems. Their key findings were:

- Systems for manpower planning and development were absent or inadequate.
- Training was given low priority throughout the authorities.
- Manager training existed but no management development. Individual managers had been on courses in management, but no planned and solid management capacity had been developed in support of fulfilling the organizations' objectives.
- Training was used remedially to compensate for individual or organizational shortcomings rather than to develop new abilities.
- Selection of trainees was haphazard and briefing/debriefing of trainees either unsatisfactory or non-existent.
- Top management support was often not visible.

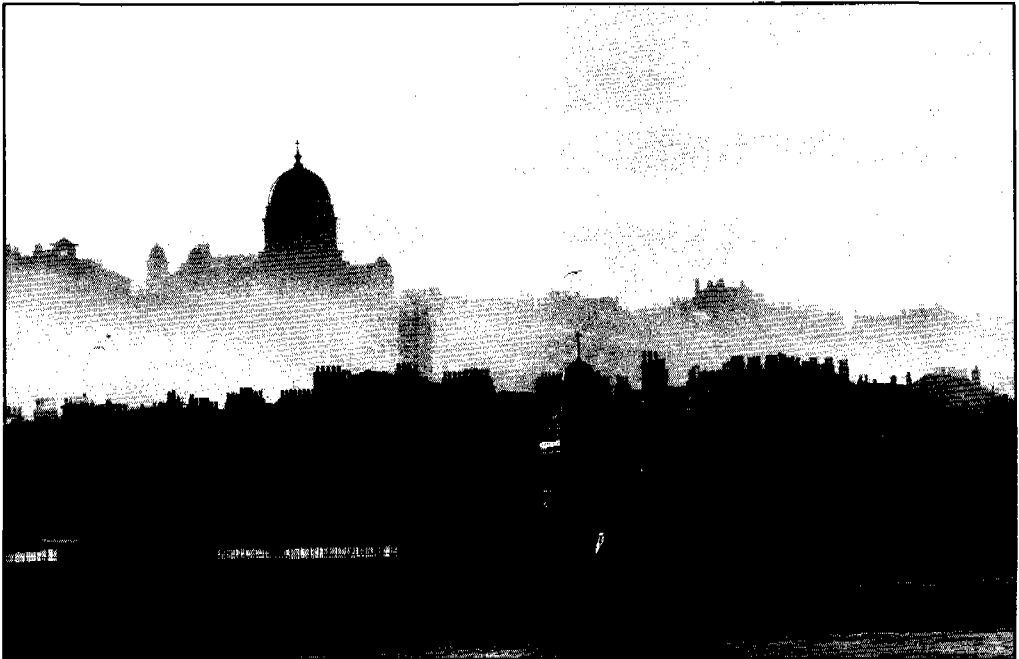
The survey also found that many managers who were highly skilled technically, had a narrow management outlook. To them, technical skills were paramount and manpower management was often neglected. It was clear that some specialists would never have to become general managers and that it was vital to preserve high technical and professional standards. Nevertheless, far more attention had to be given to management and manpower issues.

Only a handful of those managers interviewed had taken systematic action to develop their own managerial skills or that of their subordinates. Thus, regular coaching, counselling and appraisal of management staff was rare. To broaden

experience and stimulate personal growth was highly valued as a development approach, but was very rarely put into practice. Limited use had been made of courses at business schools and universities. The participants expressed enthusiasm for them, but others in the water authorities deemed them as removed from the needs at the work site. The longer the course, the more academic it tended to be with less development value for the utility.

Stimulate personal growth

The survey concluded that the many different management levels in the authorities obstructed efficient delegation, stifled initiative and creativity and inhibited the development of energetic and enthusiastic managers. This caused frustration and demoralization. For the reorganization of the water industry to be successful, it had to be backed up with appropriate management training. ♦



Keeping up a high service level to every British home does not happen by itself. Cost-effectiveness and prompt delivery of a good product have been key aims far ahead of the demands privatization will bring. (Photo: WHO/Spooner)

Part 2

Training must be directly relevant

The most significant management development ought to take place through work place experience and through contact with superiors, colleagues and subordinates, the survey suggested. A Senior Management Development Programme should be designed specifically for the water industry and be run annually for those identified as having a key role to play in the future of the industry.

The initiators of the whole process, the Chief Executives, decided to join forces with a private company, *Water Training*, to design and implement a programme. The National Management Development Group (NMDG), representative of all different water activities, was set up to coordinate the running of the SMDP.

The group is responsible to the Chief Executives. It updates the training and selects participants — always ensuring that a wide range of disciplines and experience are represented. Managers falling into the 35-45 years age group have been selected as these are considered to be in the middle of their career and thus ready to take on more responsibilities.

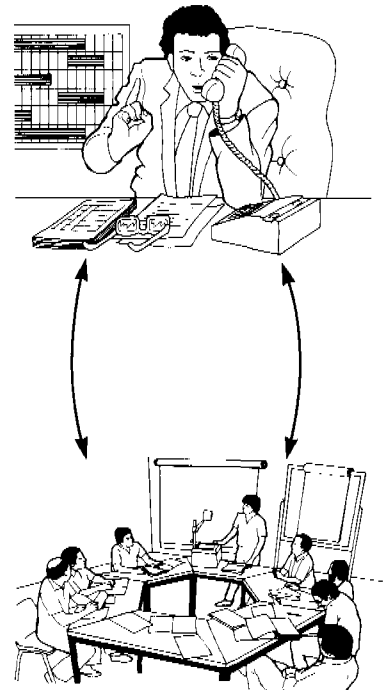
The Chief Executives decided that managers participating in the SMDP should develop:

- self-awareness of the managerial role and style
- interpersonal, team building and organizational skills
- a greater understanding of the diverse nature of the water industry and its relationship to commerce and other industries

There are 24 managers which participate each year. This number has proved to be the optimum for the different team exercises during the training. The course is scheduled over a six to seven-month period as shown opposite.◆

Programme outline

- Phase I: **Preliminary seminar**
(Training centre, two days)
Agreement of course element
Individual role discussion
- Phase II: **Preparation at work site**
(Home utility, two weeks)
Personal needs
Role Analysis
Programme discussion
- Phase III: **Module One**
(Training centre, two weeks)
Management roles and style
The management organization
- Phase IV: **Project work**
(Home utility, 2—3 months)
- Phase V: **Module Two**
(Training centre, two weeks)
Managing the environment
Policy formulation & planning
- Phase VI: **Project work**
(Home utility, 2 months)
- Phase VII: **Final sessions**
(Training centre, 3 days)
Project presentation
Learning review conference
-



Part 3

The SMDP phase by phase

Phase I - Introductory workshop

Here participants are introduced to the format of the programme and are divided into syndicates — groups of six people each — for the purpose of group exercises. They also explore their learning styles by answering a set of 80 questions. They have to answer yes or no to statements about themselves, for example:

“On balance I talk more than I listen”

“I tend to be open about how I am feeling”

“It is best to think carefully before taking action”

“I quickly get bored with methodical, detailed work”

This broad set of questions shows whether the participant is an “Activist”, “Reflector”, “Theorist” or “Pragmatist”. It is useful to know this before getting into teamwork and exercises during the modules at the training centre.

The preliminary workshop also concentrates on setting up individual and syndicate learning contracts. The participants discuss their individual learning objectives with their sponsoring manager from their own authority and with the SMDP’s Programme Director. This is to ensure that the participant learns things which correspond to the objectives and needs of his or her organization.

Phase II - Preparatory activities

Ahead of the real SMDP start, *Water Training* sends a questionnaire to several subordinates of each selected manager. They are requested to comment on how their manager makes decisions and sets goals, how he/she communicates and solves conflicts.

This input remains anonymous and the source will not, as long as the manager and the subordinate do not decide otherwise, be revealed. There is no need, for example, for the subordinate to note his/her name on the form. The manager’s colleagues are asked to comment not only on how things are, but also on how things should be.

Phase III - Module one

A two-week session at the training centre. Full details in part 4.

Phase IV - Project work

Projects are undertaken in teams of four in the work environment. Issues, which are seen as worthy of investigation, are set by top executives in the National Management Development Group. The idea is that the managers participating in the SMDP should come up with recommendations which could later be implemented. Once started, these projects run throughout the duration of the SMDP. Most of the titles reveal that it is not technical matters which have needed to be investigated but rather customer-oriented, commercially-related and internal managerial questions. Some titles of the projects over the years are:

- "Privatization - changing the culture?",
- "Senior Managers: fit for the future?",
- "Metering water - the hard sell?",
- "Striking a Balance with the Environment"
- "Secondment as part of Management Development"

Phase V - Module two

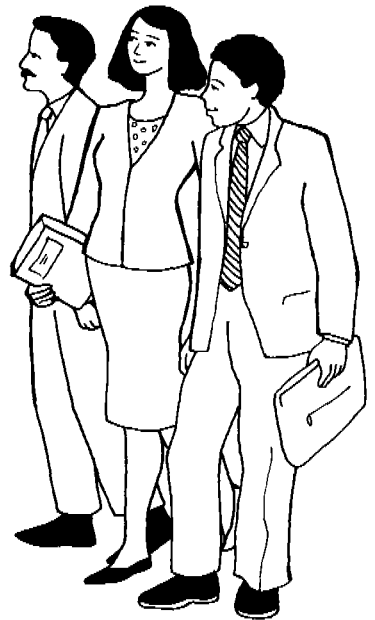
A second two-week session at the training centre. Full details in part 5.

Phase VI - Project work

Project work continues at the home utility for another two months.

Phase VII - Final sessions

Two months after the last module, the participants meet for a final session, the project presentation and learning review conference. At this stage, the participating managers must come up with recommendations, which can be put into effect. ♦



Part 4

Tough start at training centre

Outcome discussed

This section of the SMDP, phase III, takes place at a training centre over two weeks. It concentrates mostly on the delegate's personality, management role and style. Several tests and questionnaires are used to gauge the personality of the managers. The first one looks at personal style and covers 70 questions with multiple choice answers. Examples are:

In relationships should most things be:

- (a) renegotiable or
- (b) random and circumstantial?

Are you more inclined to be:

- (a) easy to approach or
- (b) somewhat reserved?

Is it worse to be:

- (a) unjust or (b) merciless?

Do you tend to choose

- (a) rather carefully or
- (b) somewhat impulsively?

The test identifies the manager's character from four angles: extrovert or introvert, sensing or intuitive, thinking or feeling and judging or perceiving. So a person may be, for example, a "ISTJ—person" basically meaning introvert, sensing, thinking and with a judging attitude toward the outer world. The outcome is discussed in the syndicate groups, so the participant is not left with only a series of words. His or her profile from the test is also compared to initial impressions which the syndicate members got.

The next concept delegates are familiarized with is management style. Once again, time for testing. The purpose of this next test is to find out a participant's strengths and how to best use them. Descriptive statements are given followed by four possible endings. The managers must rate which ending is most and least like him/her. The test starts with:

I feel most pleased with myself when I:

- (1) act idealistically and with optimism
- (2) see an opportunity for leadership and go after it

(3) look after my own interests and let others look after theirs

(4) adjust myself to fit in with the group I am with

This is followed by 17 other statements relating to a person's strengths and interpersonal style. This "strength management — strength development" test shows what management style a manager has. He/she can be Supporting-Giving, which means being an achiever and hard worker but also someone who too easily takes on the problems of others. Another style is Controlling-Taking, a manager who seeks efficiency, challenge and quick responses, but who runs the risk of not giving others enough breathing space. The Conserving-Holding type is methodical, analytical and consistent, but risks being too rigid and getting stuck in "the good old way" of doing things. The last management type is the Adapting-Dealing one who gets on very easily with subordinates and is quick to make changes. This manager may get too involved in socializing.

All the "get-to-know-yourself" tests are discussed in groups which is a way of preparing for teamwork. Many of the participants testify about this as being a tough start. Paul Parkin from Yorkshire Water relates: "We had a person in our group who completely lost face and had a serious breakdown. Fortunately, there were several so-called Supporter-Giver types in our team. They had the personality and ability to bring him back on his feet again."

By now the managers should have some insight into their personality, management style, strengths and how they are perceived by others. Having arrived on a Sunday afternoon, they are ready for practical team exercises by Wednesday morning. They have to do physical things together like constructing something with children's blocks. Afterwards they discuss their roles in the team and give each other feedback on their teamwork abilities, behaviour and so on.

The first week of Module One is fairly intensive

Strength management

Management styles

Preparing for teamwork

Positive impact

on a personal level. Stress, creating a good image and a positive impact are other subjects touched upon.

The SMDP continues over the weekend, which means that the participants stay together and meet intensively for 13 days. This is for many of the



*Managers participate in a computer-aided simulation exercise which teaches them the reality of running a water authority.
(Photo: D. Bearne)*

them a rare occasion to actually analyze their lives, their careers and their personal styles and to discuss with others in very similar situations. For many it is also an organized opportunity to discuss very personal things which are usually only dealt with at home.

The SMDP organizers have put "Career and life planning" as headline for the whole weekend. "It is likely that many of the participants are at a midway choice crisis. Most of them are men in the 35-45 age group. This is often when they suddenly ask themselves: "How good is

my life, my job, my family, my future?", says Mrs Allport.

An outside consultant leads the weekend activities. He asks participants to list pluses and minuses in their lives. "I like my job" will be listed as a plus, but "I do not have enough time with the children" is a minus. He also gets the managers to think about what to do about problems they may be facing.

What does this all have to do with being a good manager? It is a well known fact that many of us carry anger, frustration and disharmony with us from one setting to another. If the manager is not happy with himself or his family life, it is likely that his

subordinates will be affected and have to pay for that. Besides, in order to lead others successfully means being able to understand their behavioural patterns. For this, it is crucial that the manager knows his own personality.

"The participants usually gain particularly from this week which concentrates on their own personality, role, management and team style", Mrs Allport continues. "For most of them, it is the first time they step back from the work environment and look at themselves. This greater self-understanding leads to a better understanding of others, especially of their own teams back at the workplace."

"I went to the SMDP without knowing why I was there, but it has really changed my management style", says Mr Peter Bryens, who is a manager at Yorkshire Water Authority. "Today I allow others to express their ideas, I am a better listener and in general, my self-confidence is stronger."

The second week consists of lectures about organizational dynamics and how these relate to the participants' own authorities. In plenary, topics like organizational cultures, water industry culture and new looks of the water and private sector culture are treated by outside experts. The agenda includes only one team exercise during the week. Two syndicates get together, which means that there are only two big groups, and work on a task.

"For example, every year they have to design a tie as a symbol for that SMDP", says Mrs Allport. "With twelve people working in the group, you have to be loyal in the team. This means that you will not necessarily go for the best product, but rather find ways of cooperating."

Every participant has his or her own sponsor during the SMDP. This person is a senior person who goes over the knowledge, skills and insight the participants gain during the sessions. This is partly done in plenary at the end of the first module. It is a way of seeing how the trainee will fit into his organization after having been provided with this

Successful leadership

Changed approach

Outside experts

Sponsor

Whole set of new ideas

whole set of new ideas. During the SMDP's early days, participants complained that going back to regular work is almost as much of a shock as the training itself. No one would really be interested in what the SMDP trainee had gone through, and even less recognize the need for changes which he/she would suggest.

SMDP network

To solve this problem, the participant, the sponsor and the SMDP Director nowadays come to an agreement on how the acquired skills and knowledge will be used upon return to the home utility. Other factors which have helped solve the problem is that the industry as a whole is more open to change — the SMDP is well known and seen as important, water authorities have run their own mini-SMDP courses and a larger proportion of the staff has been trained to take on managerial tasks. A SMDP network has also developed through which trainees keep in touch and support one another. They are also requested to assist in running activities at subsequent SMDPs.

Define management profile

Syndicate group discussions

From the very first evening of Module One, the delegates start off with the syndicate exercise. They are asked to discuss topics related to management and personnel. What sort of people do we need in the future? Technical or entrepreneurial? What sort of management style suits the industry best? Controlling-Taking or Conserving-Holding?

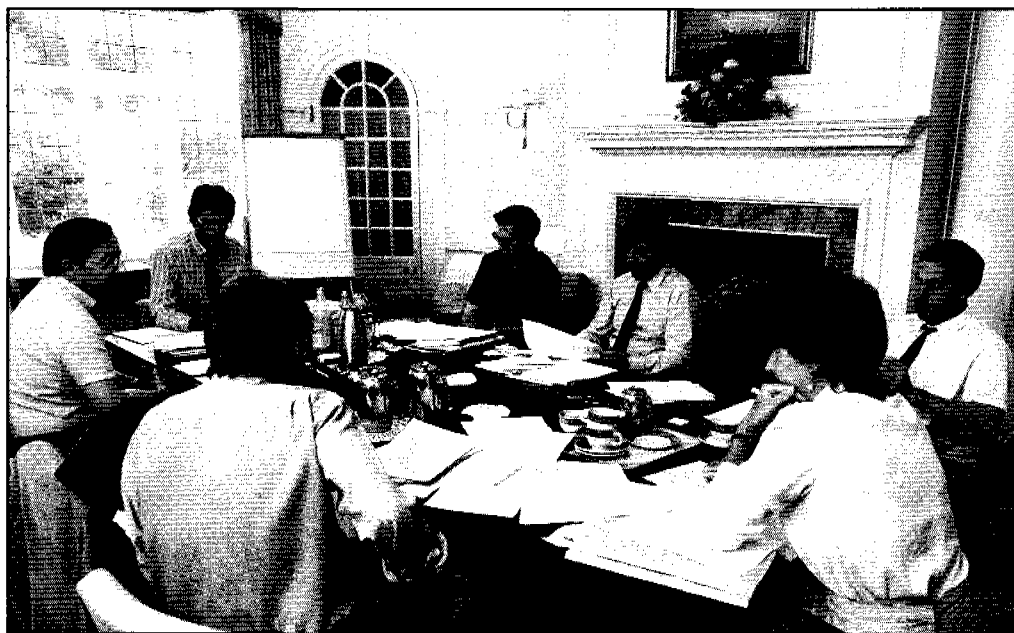
The topics are discussed in great detail and proposals have to be formulated. The findings of each syndicate are then presented to a panel of senior persons in the industry at the end of the first week. The teamwork which syndicate discussions promote has been very beneficial for participants as syndicate colleagues have proved to be very honest in giving feedback. Time for the syndicate exercises is only set aside in the evenings.

Before the conclusions of discussions are

Setting criteria

presented to senior managers, the delegates evaluate the results and have to set criteria to measure how the syndicates have worked. This means both individual-oriented and task-oriented criteria. Are different individuals allowed to have their view, or does the syndicate need to reach consensus? Did everyone have to work late into the night, just because some people wanted to perfect the work? These are the types of team-oriented questions asked besides those related to the topic.

The syndicates also discuss each manager's leadership style. What makes a leader? How do you create an image of a leader? The tutors, who are linked to every SMDP trainee, here comment on very personal things like dress, appearance and come up with very personal suggestions like "You would look better if you shaved off your beard." ♦



*The ability to work in a team and so profit from the experience of others is one of the concepts which the SMDP aims to instil in participants.
(Photo: B. Johnson)*

Part 5

Simulation tests the ability of trainees

Details of imaginary authority

After two to three months back at the work site struggling with daily duties and also with the project work, the participants go back to the training centre for a second round. The first week is used extensively for meetings with persons who have experience in various sectors of society. Participants meet with stockbrokers, insurance people, bankers, franchise experts, environmentalists, trade unionists, politicians, senior executive persons from private sector companies, experts from the water industry and so on. This is done for the purpose of having the managers set a future scenario for the industry. It is also a preparation for the training of the second week.

The Water Industry Simulation Exercise (WISE) which takes up a fair share of the second module's agenda is one of the highlights of the SMDP. It is a game which teaches participants the reality of managing a water authority with existing constraints and actual problems of the industry. It is also an opportunity for them to broaden their understanding of the range of work undertaken by the British water industry.

WISE is run using four syndicates. Each syndicate is the management team of the "Great Eastern Water Authority", an imaginary authority somewhere in England. At the start of the game, the teams are given a booklet which describes the authority, its geographic location, its structure, the preceding years' financial accounts, manpower figures and existing levels of service for all operation areas.

The teams are then given the present year's financial constraints and the exercise begins. The teams must manage the authority as best they can. The exercise runs over five days. During this time there are six decision periods. Each team has its own tutor which is responsible for seeing that the rules and deadlines are adhered to.

At the end of each decision period, each team's decisions are fed into a computer which analyzes the results and produces a statement on

the condition of the authority. If, for example, a team decides to use its capital to improve the sewerage system and fails to pay attention to the worsening condition of its reservoirs, then the computer will throw up a drought condition for that team, which then has to manage the resultant crisis.

The game is only partly computer-aided. The tutors also have a role in providing feedback. They can add new constraints and events while the game is in process. They are able to evaluate the team's performance and see what components they can add to make the game challenging and difficult. Part of the exercise consists of a major crisis in the authority which involves team members in a media appearance. A British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) journalist runs this session. Participants are recorded on video and tape and later given feedback.

At the end of the exercise, the four teams are compared and each of them has to make a presentation to a group of real Chief Executives. In this presentation, the teams have to answer questions on the validity of their decisions and have to account for their management of the "Great Eastern Water Authority". They also have to evaluate how well the team worked together.

This exercise makes the participating senior manager face a lifelike situation and puts on the pressure to reach performance targets. It also allows everyone to put into practice the team skills they learned at an earlier stage. The syndicates must also come up with a corporate five-year plan. For example, they may need to plan for a reduction of manpower or debts or take a decision which has environmental implications.

The game is put together by some senior managers from the industry, some with computer expertise and others with design experience. None had had previous experience of putting together a management game. ♦

Manage crisis

Media appearance

Pressure to reach targets

Part 6

Changes to SMDP over the years

Input provides framework

The present version of the SMDP has not changed much on the level of the programme's structure. The tests, the simulation exercise and the project work are still on the agenda. However, as could be expected, the content of the SMDP is today very different from earlier programmes. It is serving an industry which has changed greatly since the late 1970's when the Management Development Review identified the need for a senior management development programme. The SMDP has been subject to continuous revision to meet the industry's needs.

When the SMDP was launched, there were no management development programmes in the British water industry and little awareness among the middle management about the need for it. Today, the participants coming on the programme are almost certain to have undergone some form of management development which will have included a personal assessment. Most water undertakings now set performance aims for their managers and assess the manager yearly. Still, the first week of self-analysis and teamwork in syndicates has provided the participants with opportunities to look at themselves and their management styles in a new way. Although the second week of the first session at the training centre has been criticized for being too theoretical, the SMDP organizers have insisted on keeping it that way. The Input provides a framework for the self-analysis, the teamwork and the introduction to management styles and organizational structures.

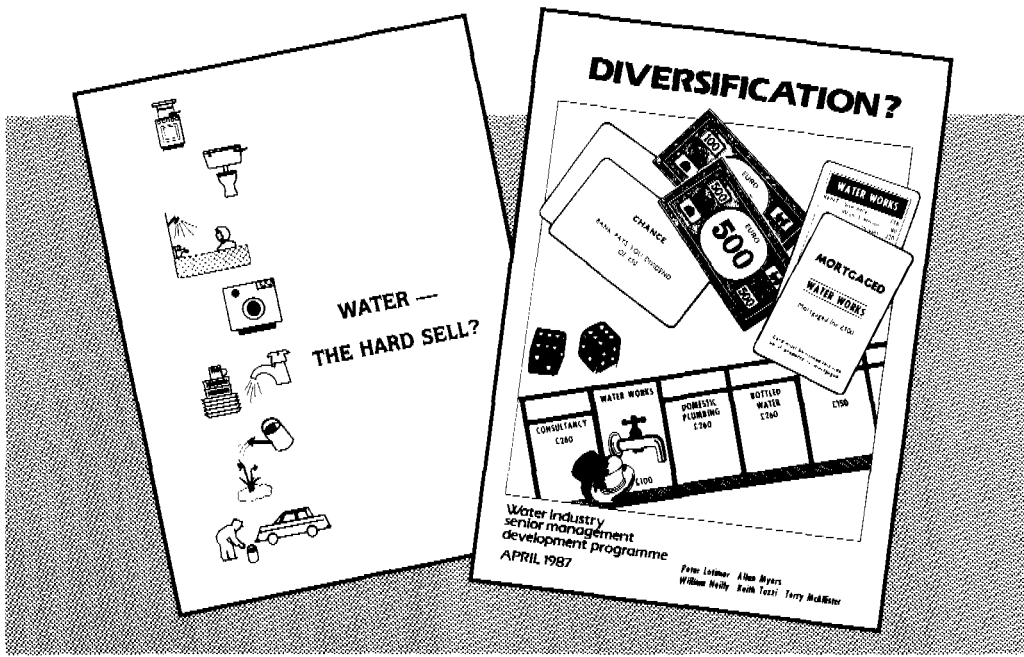
The changes in the industry are reflected in the SMDP, for example, in the list of project titles. Today the topics are far more customer-oriented compared to the earlier predominantly technical ones. The industry has during the latter part of the 1980's felt a big need to investigate marketing and services, and has ahead of it even bigger changes to cope with. The selection of project topics has changed accordingly.

The delegates have today a far greater commercial awareness than in the beginning of

the 1980's. They see the water industry in the context of other business. There is now a better understanding of the requirements of the customer and a recognition of the need for a better public image. This changed attitude is partly the result of earlier SMDPs and has influenced in its turn the later ones. This has meant changes in the simulation exercise and the imaginary "Great Eastern Water Authority".

The most fundamental change to affect the industry in the years to come is the Government's intention to privatize water and sewage functions. Tomorrow's managers will have to operate in the commercial world of shareholders and profit. For the SMDP this means adapting to help the managers meet new challenges. ♦

Better public image



Examples of the projects SMDP delegates have worked on. The documents are circulated to other participants each year.

Part 7

Parent of other training projects

Ongoing advice

To be selected for the SMDP is considered as an honour in the British water industry. It is only those who have the potential of becoming Senior Managers that take part, and it is seen as necessary for career progression. Most top level jobs within the British water industry are filled by SMDP trainees. The SMDP network among managers also functions in support of this.

As only 24 persons are admitted each year, several water authorities have set up their own management development programmes. *Water Training*, has also conducted shortened versions of the SMDP and individually designed programmes for single authorities to speed up the rate of change.

In one of the medium sized authorities, the top 150 managers were taken through a "mini-SMDP" which concentrated mainly on interpersonal awareness and team building. This was followed by using team skills to look at current problems within the authority and making recommendations to overcome them. This development programme was run on a part-time basis and took over a year to complete. It was seen as very valuable in changing attitudes and preparing the managers for coming changes.

"This authority was probably one of the most backward in respect of managerial development and training", says Mrs Allport, "but today it is one of the leading organizations in this respect."

In another smaller water authority the top management team was given ongoing advice by *Water Training* over a period of six months. About sixty senior managers were included. This process concentrated on improving interpersonal skills, breaking down inter-departmental barriers and helping managers become more active in changing the authority.

"We have taken our managers through a revised SMDP, and have in this way become much more cost-effective", says Eric Rhodes at Yorkshire Water Authority. This authority would not have been able to reduce its staff by over a thousand people

without having been prepared for new management situations, according to several managers in the authority. In several of the authorities, the training takes place at divisional level with divisional management teams.

A shortened version of the SMDP has been offered on a yearly basis to managers at the South Staffordshire Waterworks. It is run over a two-week period and concentrates on personal profile, teamwork and time management. Participants also have to work in groups on a project.

"The programme teaches you how to use your own strengths and how to contribute your share instead of either controlling a group or being completely passive", says Mr Anthony John Woodward. He recounts how in his department they established work teams so that staff could benefit from each others' experience. Initially, not everybody understood the advantages of teamwork. It was quite a struggle for those who had been through the management development programme to convince the others that teamwork is constructive for all team members. ♦

Training at divisional level

Using own strengths

For the future

Lessons learned

➤ **Management training must result from well identified needs.** The SMDP was launched after several years of a severe shortage of managers. The water industry had changed and so had staff requirements. In this case, there was a lack of skilled managers. A careful survey was conducted spelling out the problem. Based on this information, an appropriate and in-depth training programme could be designed.

➤ **Lecturing is not the one and only way to teach things.** In evaluations of the SMDP, the lecturing is considered to be heavy during the second week of the first module. The managers say that they profit more from the exercises in teams and from the tests and discussions about their own personalities and styles. However, the organizers have decided to keep the lectures as they consider the lectures valuable in providing theory and ideas for the other sessions.

➤ **Workshop activities must be directly relevant to participants' work.** Exercises and games, for example, should be related to the daily work and lives of participants. When the Water Industry Simulation Exercise was first tried out it did not really reflect problems in the management of the water industry. The game used was leased from another public utility, and the delegates therefore did not see the value of the exercise.

➤ **Meeting senior persons is encouraging.** At the end of the whole programme, delegates get the possibility of meeting Senior Executives and top level managers and hearing them openly talk about why certain decisions were taken by the British water industry and how they have learned from some of the mistakes. This helps delegates understand some of the constraints facing them.

➤ **Individual training must be supported upon return.** After the first SMDP, the trainees returned to their authorities with changed attitudes and fully motivated to accomplish the changes which they had recognized as necessary. However, they

returned only to find that their colleagues still saw no need for change. This led to real frustration, which however, formed the basis for creating the SMDP network. The SMDP organizers therefore decided that a "contract" should be set up between the delegate and his/hersponsor to ensure that the trainee is able to use and apply new knowledge and skills.

➤ **Support from top level essential for sustainable development.** The Chief Executives in the water industry have not only supported the SMDP but have also taken an active part in its implementation. They take part in design, in suggesting topics for the project and are present during certain parts of the programme. They are fully committed to the SMDP, and the delegates can see this.

➤ **Training must be tailor-made to needs.** The success of the SMDP lies very much in its adaptation to the industry's profile. As the top level people in the industry take a big part in its design, the SMDP is kept up to date. Now and then, executives complain that the SMDP does not manage to keep pace with the changes, but then the SMDP is revised. The project work, the problems raised in the simulation exercise and the visiting lecturers are, for example, components of the agenda which differ from year to year.

➤ **Individual training must be part of organizational development.** Prior to the SMDP, single managers had participated in management courses, but there was no real management development with long term objectives and plans. Their training had not been in accordance with any planned changes in their workplace. Changes in big organizations rarely take place because of individual training.

➤ **Self-understanding is essential for understanding others.** The SMDP starts with an intensive week-long programme of exercises to make participants aware of their behaviour and styles. Many say that having to reflect about

themselves, their style, career and family life is productive.

➤ **Give the training status and everyone wants to join.** Given that the SMDP was devised and supported by the very top management, it rapidly became a status training programme. In other cases it is advisable to solicit this support to make the programme attractive. If the returning participants are recognized as being more skilled and knowledgeable by their superiors, others are likely to want to follow.

➤ **Competence in one area does not imply competence in all others too.** One of the Chief Executives of the British water industry calls the average manager "tunnelvisioned" meaning someone who is technically oriented and lacks broader views and experience. In general, a high technical competence does not necessarily include capabilities for becoming a good manager.

➤ **Selection of trainees is crucial.** Those selected for the SMDPs have all been considered likely candidates for key positions in the industry in the future. They are selected, amongst other things, on the grounds that others would benefit from their training. As the participants are all between 35-45 years old, they are all likely to stay in the industry and are ready to take on new responsibilities and grow.

➤ **Water supply is a service.** Since the changes in the British water industry during the 1970's, the need to be more customer-oriented has become more evident to each manager. Cost-efficiency and commercial awareness is something the formerly "tunnelvisioned" engineers have had to familiarize themselves with. ♦



The British water industry has had tremendous difficulties in trying to overcome the problem of polluted waters. The reorganization of the industry made the new, big authorities responsible for the whole water cycle and demanded a multifaceted and more competent management.
(Photo: WHO/Spooner)

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