

# SUSTAINABLE PERFORMANCE IMPROVEMENT

Good managers want to improve their performance, as evidenced by their insatiable interest in new books about management excellence, and their willingness to carve time out of busy schedules for workshops that promise management strategies to revitalize organizations, foster teamwork, and improve the performance of enterprises. Many models of management performance improvement surfaced over the past decade, although most were not called “models,” as such. But to the extent that these programs claim a causal relationship between normative management behaviors and desired enterprise performance, they constitute models that warrant rigorous evaluation, in terms of measured effectiveness, compared to both their claimed results and *competing* models of performance improvement.

## Which Improvement Model Works Best?

The past decade saw a plethora of popular management books that advocated a variety of dogmas. Managers were urged to promote teamwork through reward systems and new organization forms, to pay for performance, to train managers and staff in “total quality” principles, to deploy cross-functional teams, to re-engineer core business processes, to return to value-based management fundamentals, to adopt the Baldrige criteria, to foster and reward continuous improvement, to implement “balanced scorecards,” to derive and use customer-driven performance measures, to benchmark these measures, and to employ all these strategies while downsizing, outsourcing, simplifying, and producing just-in-time results. No manager could afford to employ *all* these programs. Some management improvement protocols that extolled simplification, streamlining, clarity, and accountability became obese, rigid, and even bureaucratic, violating their own precepts. The streamlining agenda needed a dose of its own medicine.

Conscientious managers had little objective information to enable them to choose from an array of rapidly promulgated ideas. “New” management ideas were backed by little verifiable data demonstrating their efficacy. Many ideas were superbly presented not only in print but also by consultants who polished and added pricey legitimacy. Most new methods were promoted without attacking other strategies, but with a dogmatism that implied the superiority of new theories over their antecedents and competing models. Anecdotal evidence was used to extol new methods of organizing, managing, and rewarding people, buoyed by rising optimism about the productivity and competitiveness of American industries.

However, the thoughtful manager could find little evidence about the relative effectiveness of various improvement programs, to enable an informed decision about where best to invest limited time. Which tools would most efficiently and assuredly lead to improved management effectiveness and enterprise performance?

In fact, many of the improvement programs that surfaced (or *re*-surfaced) during the past decade were unvalidated models. They may sound sensible and appear to yield worthwhile benefits. But *empirical* evidence -- in terms of systematic, verifiable cause and effect -- rarely links management behaviors believed to be effective with desired work group performance patterns (such as teamwork and collaboration), or with measured organizational performance.

## **Shortcomings of Management Behavioral Models**

Many management behavioral models are inadequate in other ways, besides lacking an empirical basis. Some models prove too complicated to assimilate and put into practice, such as conditional or situational models that expect a manager to adopt different supervisory behaviors based on different attributes of the group being supervised or the task at hand. Experienced managers know that they will be perceived as more credible and trusted if subordinates do *not* experience variances in management style from task to task, group to group, or individual to individual.

Some management models are descriptive and analytic, rather than normative, providing little guidance on how to put them into practice. And the models that *are* normative often do not define behaviors that can be broadly understood and applied -- at all levels of supervision, across a range of organizations, under varying circumstances, by different people.

Some management models are *great leader-centric*, basing “theory” on a heroic, charismatic, larger-than-life interpretation of what made popular political or business leaders effective. Although these accounts are fascinating, they entail several problems: First, it is not clear to most managers how to apply a leadership model of heroic proportions to everyday problems in their immediate organizations. This challenge can be disillusioning to a mid-career manager who recognizes the improbability of following in the steps of Lee Iacocca, John F. Kennedy, or Martin Luther King, Jr., and frustrating because many of the “great leader theories” center more on traits than behaviors. Managers intent on improving their leadership skills cannot do anything about changing personality or physical traits. Useful models must be built on understandable, changeable *behaviors*.

Finally, many models are *incomplete* because they do not encompass work group dynamics influenced by management behavior. Some of these models survey employees about whether management behaviors are perceived favorably or experienced as effective, but they do not measure whether desired work group patterns (teamwork, collaboration, information-sharing) actually improve based on such behaviors. Whether or not “management styles” are perceived favorably by those supervised is interesting, but not nearly as useful as measured correlations between normative management behaviors and work group effectiveness.

## **What Essentials Constitute a Good Management Model?**

If management improvement models fall short in the ways discussed above, what essential features would be evident in a complete, useful model? First, it would be simple in ways that lend broad structure and clarity to the complex relationships among managers, employees individually and in groups, and the overall work product of these relationships. Effective management models contain both analytic and synthetic features. Analytic elements dissect a

problem and provide a descriptive framework, while synthetic elements reformulate in a normative way that aims for improvement. Managers may not comprehend how to improve behaviors by reading a purely analytic or descriptive analysis, even of the highest caliber. Therefore, useful management models need to contain synthetic as well as analytic components.

Second, good management models come to grips with *values* that motivate behavior. Improvement is about changing behaviors (of managers, employees, work groups), which are rooted in the belief systems that characterize the “informal organization.” Whether intrinsic or explicit, management behavioral models embody values -- about what *forms* of leading, following, solving problems, and communicating are expected, tolerated, rewarded, and respected. Therefore, in order to influence how people in a workplace lead, follow, communicate, and solve problems, an improvement model must engage the dynamic interplay of values, expectations, disincentives, symbols, motivations, and beliefs that affects individual and team behaviors.

Third, the value of a *behavioral* model depends on whether it can be validated *empirically*. Changing management practices and work group patterns requires an investment of time and resources, and a validated model provides assurance that the organization is not rewarding the wrong behaviors, incentivizing the wrong values, sending mixed messages about expectations, or pursuing a trend that will soon fall out of favor if it does not produce quick results.

Finally, a performance *improvement* model needs to be capable of changing behavior through measurement, feedback, and learning. Sustainable improvement requires simple, understandable, normative data that can be broadly applied by managers who want to improve their own effectiveness.

Our search for a performance improvement model that satisfied these essential criteria proved frustrating. We wanted a model that was:

- empirically-based, but not overly complex;
- rigorous and analytical, but also normative in simple, straightforward ways that lend to everyday application;
- inclusive of the intra-organizational dynamics of workgroups and managers rather than merely based on employee perceptions of “management styles”;
- behavior-based, rather than centered around personality traits; and
- broadly applicable across varying organizations and different managers’ personalities, to engage performance improvement at *all levels* in the enterprise.

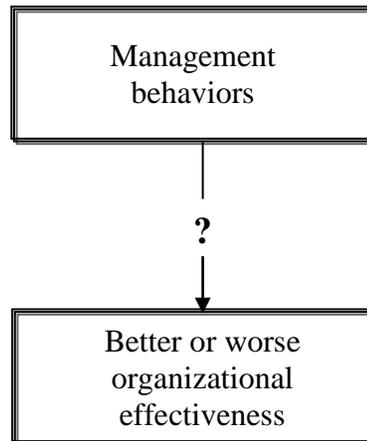
In the final analysis, it was necessary to develop our own model. The balance of this paper is about the performance improvement model derived and applied in UC Irvine’s Administrative and Business Services division over eight generations<sup>1</sup> of surveying, analyzing, and improving management performance and organizational effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> Eight survey instruments were administered across administrative service units at UC Irvine over the 1996-2005 period. These findings stem primarily from analysis of the 4<sup>th</sup> generation survey instrument, which continues to be used annually.

## Does Management Matter?

In its simplest form, we postulated a model that involved (1) measurable management behaviors, (2) organizational effectiveness measures, and (3) a possible relationship between these two constructs, simply illustrated:



As a nonprofit enterprise, organizational effectiveness metrics were not readily available -- no market share, return-on-investment, net profit, or market capitalization data. However, our *Model for Sustaining Administrative Improvement*<sup>2</sup> expressed Baldrige-like, normative teamwork principles for an envisioned, high performance organization:

- Teamwork requires individuals to enter into interdependencies involving risk, which requires a foundation of trust.
- People can create interdependencies involving trust and vulnerability when they feel that facts and neutral data are valued.
- No one is rewarded for looking good at the expense of another. Team players are committed to each other's success.
- Innovation requires open debate about many "wrong" ideas. Process redesign needs the benefit of early mistakes in order to avoid *late*-stage errors.
- Interpersonal problems are resolved so that they do not undermine teamwork by distorting perceptions of others' motives, which can occur when stakeholders struggle with change.
- Innovation, continuous improvement, and a willingness to question the status quo are valued by supervisors and co-workers.

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<sup>2</sup> Cited by the National Association of College and University Business Officers (First Prize, Higher Education Awards Program, 1995) and the *USA Today* Quality Cup Award (1996). The UC Irvine *Model for Sustaining Administrative Improvement*, which can be viewed at: <http://www.abs.uci.edu/>, also adopted non-behavioral goals and strategies.

These foundational principles and values were simplified into less abstract, simply expressed, readily measurable behavioral expectations for individuals and work groups:

- People who seek better methods are respected and rewarded.
- People experience mutual respect in the workplace.
- Groups value member suggestions, including ones that are initially “wrong.”
- Co-workers produce ideas to help solve problems when they surface.
- Problems with the way the group does its work are addressed in the work group.
- Members can criticize the way the work group functions without penalty.
- People can discuss problems without fear of “looking stupid” to co-workers.
- Interpersonal conflicts are addressed in the work group.
- Differences of opinion about how to get the job done are discussed openly.
- Differences of opinion about how to get the job done are resolved using facts.
- Everyone shares responsibility for the results of group tasks.

At this stage of development we had a *normative* model, but not a validated, *causal* model.

## **What Makes an Organization Effective?**

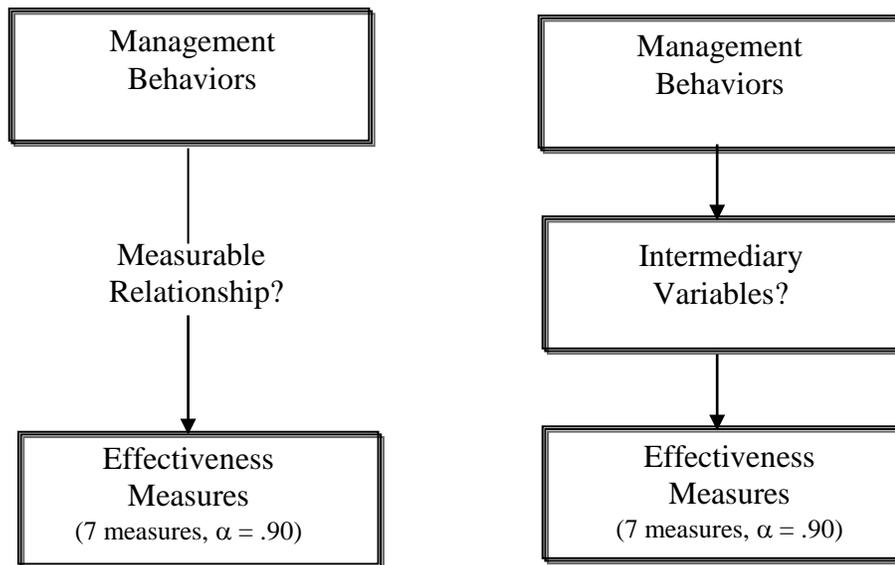
Effectiveness measures for the envisioned high performance organization were derived from Baldrige principles and the behavioral expectations outlined above. Specifically:

- Work group members share a common set of goals
- Work group members embrace consistent standards of effectiveness
- Work group members share common values of service, quality, and excellence
- Work groups are committed to meet the needs of customers
- Work groups continually improve practices, productivity, and effectiveness
- Work groups do not wait for complaints before tackling problems
- Work groups perceive themselves as efficient and productive.

Other effectiveness measures were tested, but the seven measures stated above formed the most useful and coherent construct.<sup>3</sup> These measures were readily and consistently understood when incorporated into our *Survey of Management and Organizational Patterns*, which originated as a “climate survey” of normative teamwork and supervisory attributes -- initially, with no known correlations or causal structure, and no clear value beyond a “feel good” exercise.

## The Beginnings of an Empirical Model

At this stage the emerging model looked like one of the two diagrams below:



Further analysis of our *Survey of Management and Organizational Patterns* revealed a very coherent construct of workplace cooperation measures:

“In my work group...<sup>4</sup>

- Differences of opinion about how to get the job done are resolved using facts (rather than power)
- Everyone shares responsibility for the results of group tasks
- A suggestion about work methods is valued even if it’s initially ‘wrong’
- When problems surface my co-workers produce information and ideas that help solve the problem

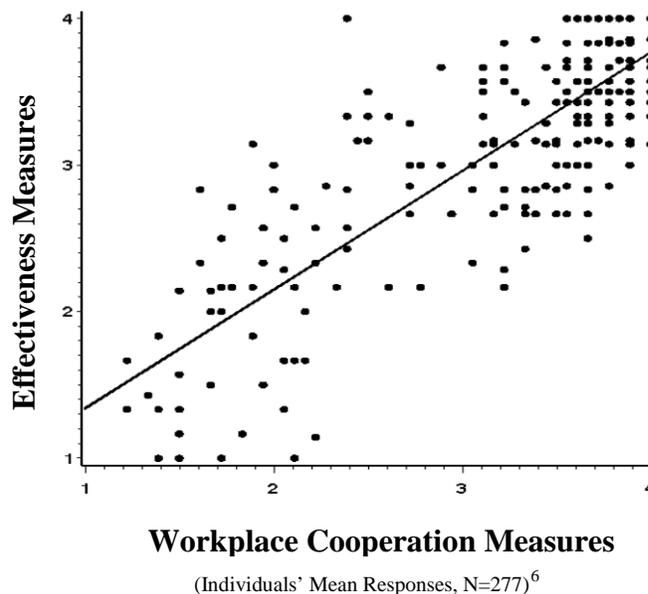
<sup>3</sup> Chronbach’s  $\alpha = .90$ , indicating a very coherent construct comprising the seven effectiveness measures.

<sup>4</sup> Bullets reflect actual survey wording (for this construct and others throughout).

- When faced with a setback or challenging problem my work group experiences *fewer* interpersonal problems (rather than becoming fragmented)
- Group members share expertise when facing a challenging task
- Leadership responsibilities are shared and frequently handed off
- Work group members express little concern about whether tasks are divided ‘fairly’
- Problems with the way my work group functions are faced and attended to.”

Most of the organization’s work products stem from *group* effort in which collaboration, cooperation, information-sharing, and other forms of teamwork are essential. Thus, finding a “cooperation” construct that correlates with measured effectiveness was no surprise.

The nine-measure Workplace Cooperation construct (defined above) evidences a correlation with the Effectiveness Measures construct (described earlier). The strength ( $r^2 = .74$ ) of this correlation<sup>5</sup> can be seen in the scattergram:



<sup>5</sup> Any correlation this strong needs to be questioned. Do the two constructs share a mutual linear relationship or do they measure, in effect, the same underlying dimension? The two constructs’ questions appear to measure a range of differing, distinct values and behaviors. Closer examination suggests that the “effectiveness” construct measures work group values: a common set of goals; consistent standards; values of service, quality, and excellence; commitment to customers’ needs and to continual improvement; and a shared, positive view of the work group’s effectiveness. These values are outward looking -- toward the customer, the work-product, and the quality of the group’s output. The “cooperation” construct, on the other hand, focuses inward on “how” rather than “what” work groups do: how differences are resolved, who feels responsible, how information is shared and problems are solved, how interpersonal problems are addressed. The questions comprising the Effectiveness Measures and the Workplace Cooperation constructs thus appear to measure different, independent variables.

<sup>6</sup> All scattergrams reflect a 1-4 scale and a common question/response format: 1= Disagree Strongly, 2= Disagree, 3= Agree, 4= Strongly Agree. In this and later scattergrams, <N points are displayed due to overlapping data points.

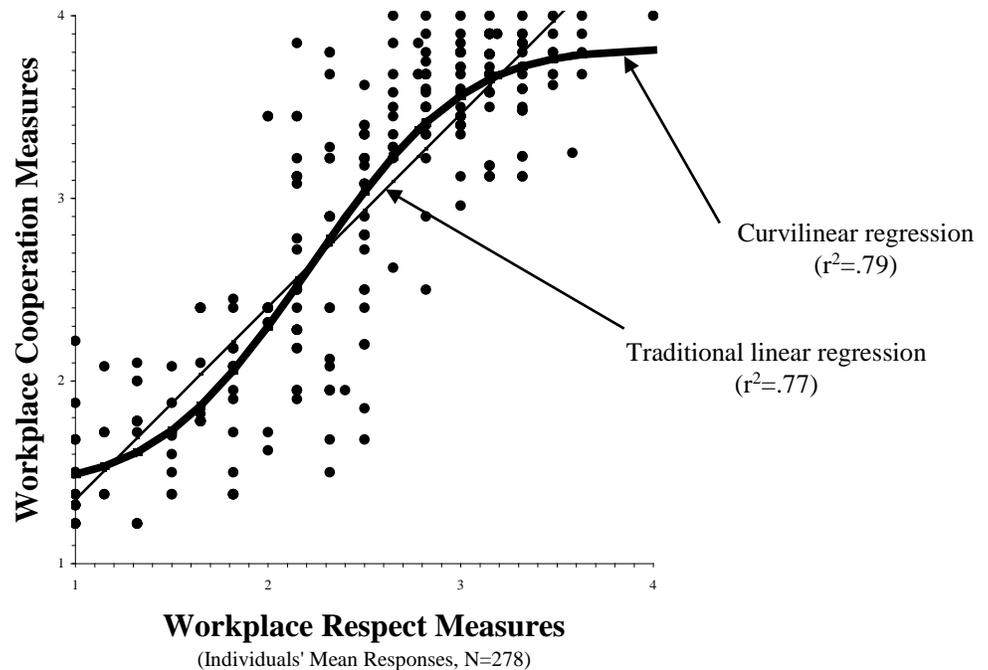
## A Pivotal Factor Emerges

Canonical correlation analysis revealed a distinct,<sup>7</sup> *intermediary* construct between Workplace Cooperation and normative management behaviors. This construct characterizes **Workplace Respect** values and work patterns:

“In my work group...

- People who seek better methods are respected and rewarded
- Interpersonal conflicts are addressed and resolved in the work group
- People can criticize the way the work group functions without penalty
- People recognize and accept each other’s strengths and weaknesses
- People can share (work) problems without concern about ‘appearing stupid’
- Co-workers experience a climate of mutual respect.”

The correlation between Workplace Respect measures and Workplace Cooperation is strong, whether based on a traditional linear approximation or a nonlinear model, as displayed below:

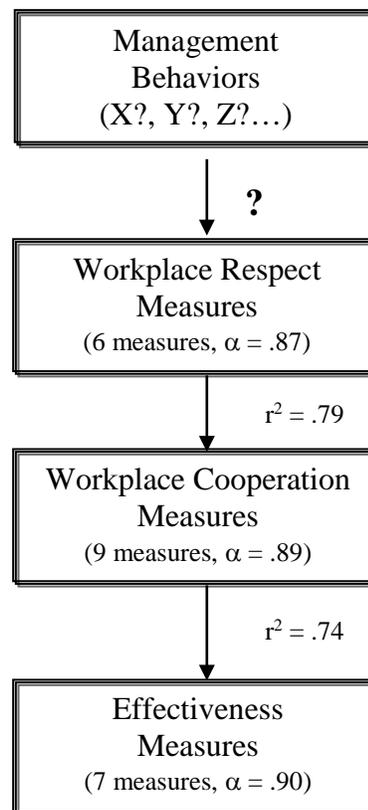


The near-discontinuity at about 2.5 on the horizontal scale is significant. Workplace Respect measures greater than 2.5 appear to sharply raise the level of Workplace Cooperation, which is practically assured when Workplace Respect exceeds 2.8. Conversely, when Workplace Respect drops below 2.2, Workplace Cooperation plummets, with *zero exceptions*. A more informative picture of the relationship between these variables is provided by a non-linear approximation, based on a cumulative normal function, which provides the S-shaped curve shown above.

<sup>7</sup> Statistical analysis confirmed that constructs are distinct and independent.

## Management Effectiveness: Measurable Behaviors or Vague Concepts?

The emerging model -- in order to become complete and useful -- now requires a definable, measurable set of management behaviors that demonstrably affects workplace respect, cooperation, and effectiveness:



A backward-stepwise statistical procedure derived the final model. Analysis flowing from each revision of the survey instrument gradually revealed the key management behaviors that would form the strongest construct in the emerging model.<sup>8</sup> In fact, various generations of the survey instrument evaluated over 150 different management behaviors in order to discover the strongest set demonstrating the greatest predictive strength.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> To empirically substantiate the path of the model, we used partial correlations to validate the model's various relationships. These analyses confirm that, at each step, the best predictor of a given construct is the construct immediately preceding it in the model. Partial correlations of other possible relationships all approach zero. The fact that the most significant and robust partial correlations were found in the order coinciding with the path of the model appears to confirm that the correlations observed among the model's various constructs are independent of any undiscovered, underlying factor with which all of the constraints may be associated.

<sup>9</sup> While the model's constructs were derived theoretically, based on concepts affirmed throughout the management literature, there is strong *empirical* evidence for their derivation: All constructs had alpha reliability coefficients  $>.80$ , indicating that each represents a common concept in the minds of respondents.

In seeking the most meaningful management effectiveness variables, we focused on:

- Behaviors, not personality traits;
- Behaviors that could be simply described, understandable to survey respondents at all levels in the organization;
- Behaviors that had evidenced an *empirical* relationship to organizational effectiveness, performance, or outcomes as reported in peer-reviewed research.

In the final analysis, “discarded” variables included over a hundred behaviors that most managers would rate high on the list of desirable, effective practices. Many of these variables *do* correlate strongly in the model, but they were simply outperformed by the nineteen key management behaviors that remained standing following an exhaustive analysis.

These **Effective Management Behaviors**, stated below essentially verbatim from the survey instrument, are grouped into six management qualities for presentation purposes:

#### *Values New Ideas*

- My supervisor rewards initiative;
- will try new, potentially better methods;
- treats new ideas with respect.

#### *Values Others' Views*

- My supervisor involves subordinates in important decisions;
- takes time to listen and understand;
- provides feedback when subordinates share ideas.

#### *Appreciates Differences Among People*

- My supervisor recognizes that individuals' needs and abilities differ;
- values the experiences and perspectives of people from diverse backgrounds.

#### *Takes Action to Solve Problems and Conflicts*

- My supervisor takes steps to improve bad relationships;
- takes action to resolve interpersonal conflicts;
- finds win/win solutions;
- learns from his/her mistakes;
- sorts essential from unimportant information.

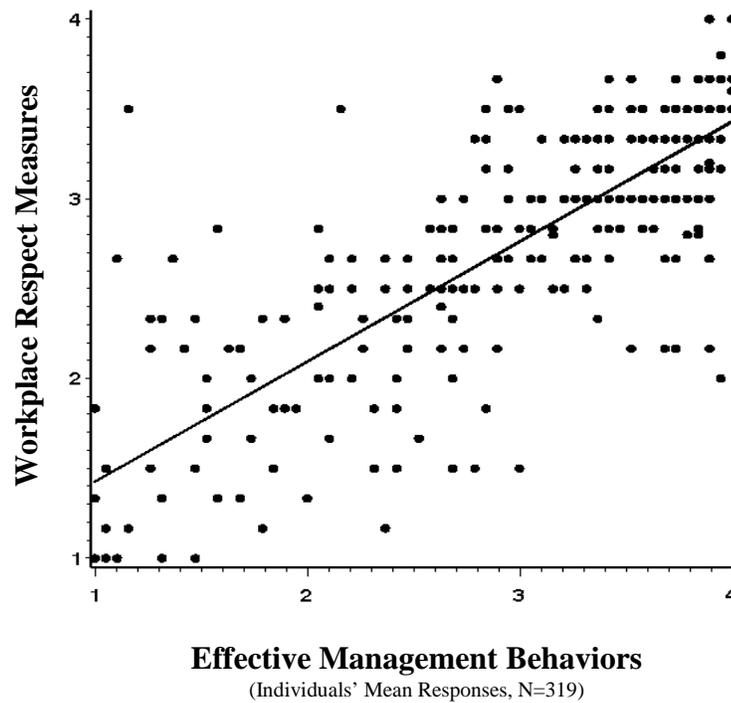
#### *Communicates Expectations*

- My supervisor communicates what he/she expects to be accomplished;
- provides understandable performance measurement data.

### *Principled*

- My supervisor maintains consistency between words and actions;
- acts in ways that build respect in him/her;
- models the behavior he/she expects from others;
- recruits and promotes fairly regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or age.

The nineteen-measure Effective Management Behaviors construct defined above evidences a strong correlation ( $r^2 = .66$ ) with the Workplace Respect construct:



In addition to *positive* management behaviors displayed above, we also explored whether *negative* supervisory behaviors might undermine workplace respect.

### **Six Behaviors Guaranteed to *Undermine* Management Effectiveness**

A subset of *negative* management behaviors constitutes a distinct, interesting construct. These behaviors sharply negate effective management behaviors:

- My supervisor loses his/her temper under pressure;
- makes some people look good at others' expense;
- discourages my bringing up problems;

- favors an “in group” of subordinates;
- waits until a problem escalates before acting;
- makes subordinates “feel stupid” when they disagree with him/her.

This construct, labeled **Management Detractors**, evidences a *negative* correlation ( $r = -.79$ ,  $r^2 = .63$ ) with the Effective Management Behaviors construct. Supervisors who display *even one or two* of these negative behaviors show sharply reduced Effective Management behaviors, and hence diminished ability to foster Workplace Respect.

## Everyday Leadership

More than a few management and leadership books have expressed the view that management skills and leadership behaviors are *opposites*. The former entail what are sometimes labeled the “ministerial” functions of planning, organizing, controlling, supervising, allocating, and the like; the latter behaviors center around setting a vision, inspiring people to identify with it, invoking a desire to pattern behavior after that of the charismatic leader, and other decidedly non-ministerial functions. Most such comparisons seem to assume that a leadership void opens up just below the chief executive officer. They do not appear to contemplate that managers who do planning, organizing, and controlling can also lead -- at least not in the charismatic, high-profile, visionary sense, which is seen as the role of the (singular) CEO-leader. Some management academics even postulate that a good leader cannot be a good manager, and vice-versa. Anecdotal, rather than empirical, information is usually offered to back up these views.

The *Survey of Management and Organizational Patterns* included a number of leadership qualities intermixed with the management variables being measured. These were borrowed from empirical research on leadership. The expectation, based on the prevalent view noted above, was that if these leadership variables emerged as a coherent construct in the model, that construct might show a *negative* correlation with Effective Management Behaviors.

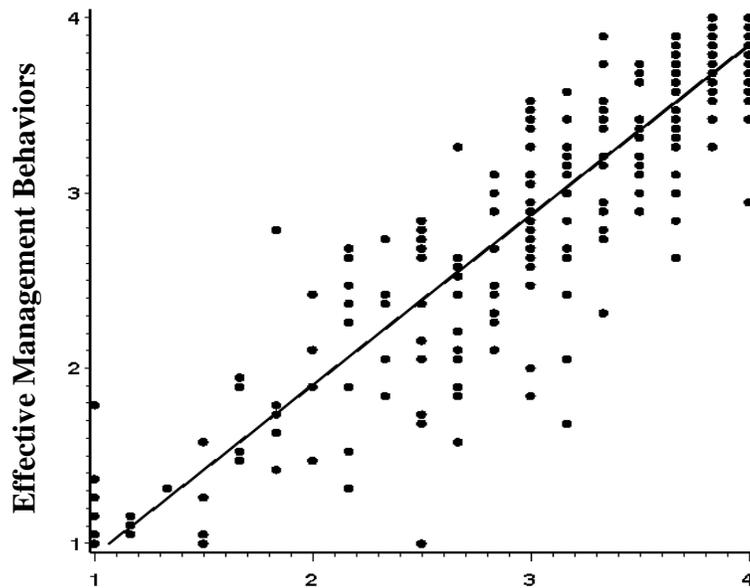
The results were exactly opposite. The following variables did emerge as a coherent ( $\alpha = .94$ ) construct of **Leadership Qualities and Behaviors**:

“My supervisor...

- appears self-confident;
- remains confident despite setbacks;
- talks optimistically about the future;
- conveys a strong commitment to goals;

- communicates an inspiring vision for change;
- presents convincingly when speaking to a group.”

However, these Leadership Qualities and Behaviors evidenced a very strong ( $r^2 = .86$ ) *positive* correlation with the Effective Management Behaviors construct:



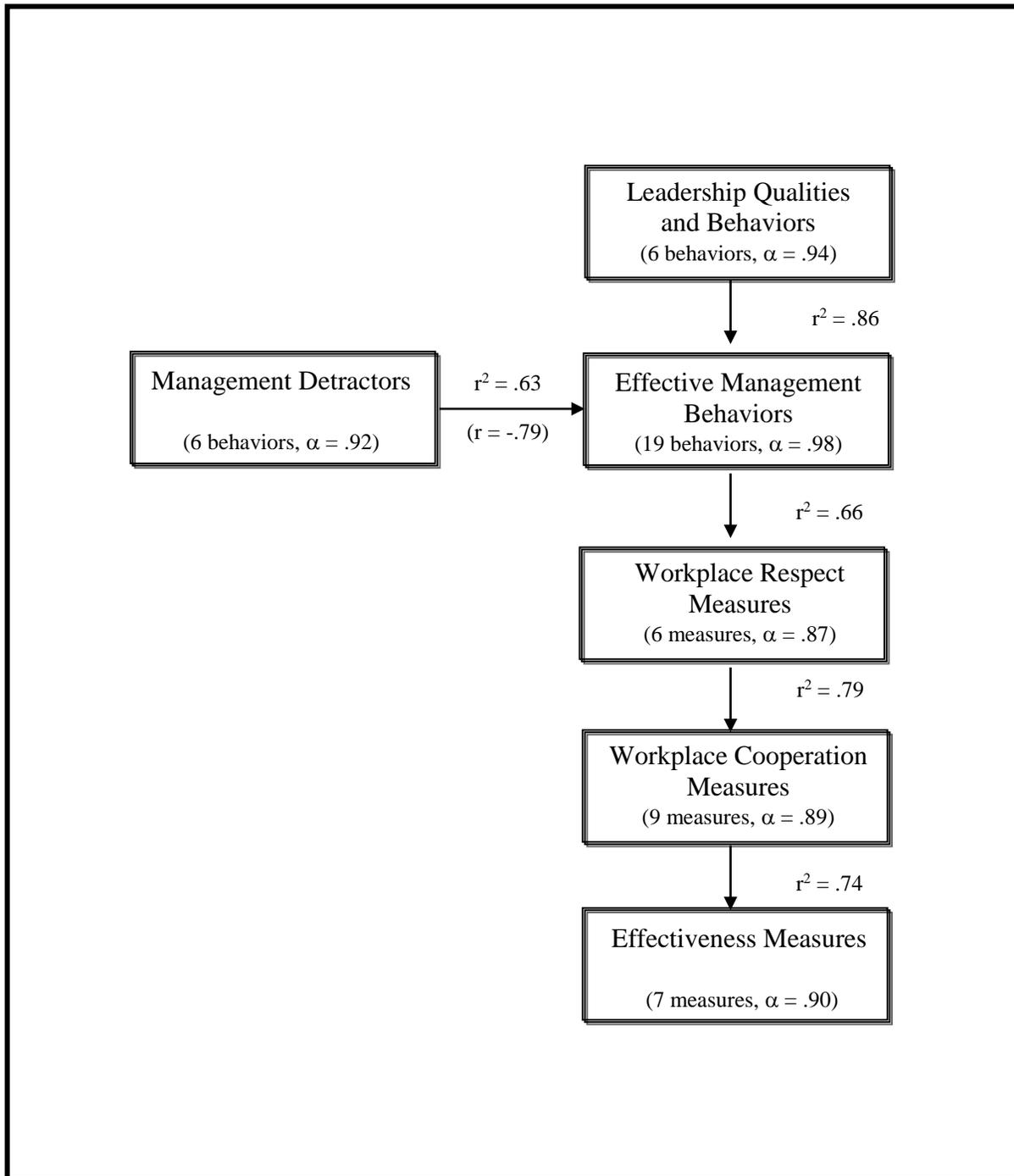
**Leadership Qualities & Behaviors**  
 (Individuals' Mean Responses, N=313)

Clearly, at the level of everyday operations, leadership qualities and behaviors are evident, especially among those with the most effective *management* skills. Leadership qualities and management skills are *not* mutually exclusive, but consistently found in the same individuals, and at every level in the organization.

This correlation was so high that extra statistical testing was employed to ensure that two, distinct constructs exist. Both the quantitative analysis and careful reading of the questions, themselves, (which reveals that they do, in fact, ask about entirely different behaviors) confirm that the leadership and management constructs in this model are independent. In conclusion: Management behaviors and leadership behaviors are entirely different, yet highly correlated.

## The Complete Performance Improvement Model

All of this model's components have now been discussed. The following diagram represents the complete Performance Improvement Model with its pertinent statistical attributes:



## **What Does this Model Reveal about Management Performance?**

The performance improvement model discussed and diagrammed above is linear and simple, and its interpretation is therefore straightforward. Although correlation analysis does not ensure the direction of predictive or causal arrows, they are hypothesized as follows: Leadership Qualities and Effective Management Behaviors provide the *foundation* for Workplace Respect; the latter is, in turn, the precursor to Workplace Cooperation, which then leads to organizational effectiveness. Simply stated, key management and leadership behaviors foster workplace respect, which enables workplace cooperation, which then yields team-based performance.

The model demonstrates the foundational role of management in enabling teamwork. Specific supervisory behaviors are required in order to establish and sustain Workplace Respect -- the *necessary precursor* to Workplace Cooperation. Workplace Respect, at the center of the model, is more pivotal than even its high correlations would suggest. The data (page 8) reveal that above a critical level of Workplace Respect, cooperation rises sharply; below this threshold, it plummets. This pattern is equally clear at the organizational unit level (departments and sub-departments). When a unit's Workplace Respect measure drops below 2.9, Workplace Cooperation is simply unattainable.<sup>10</sup>

The model thus reveals a singular, linear critical-path to management performance.<sup>11</sup> It demonstrates that a manager can do very little to *directly* influence workplace cooperation or enterprise performance. Rather, the primary role of the effective manager is to excel in the behaviors that lead to workplace respect -- the foundation on which desired organizational patterns and, ultimately, team-based performances depend. Fortunately, these behaviors can be improved through goal setting, measurement, and feedback.

## **Can High Performance Teams Emerge Without Supervision?**

A popular management belief suggests that teams, provided with appropriate resources and empowered by the authority to solve problems as needed to pursue an understood mission, can develop effective patterns with little supervisory influence. This view is heralded as "the organization of the future" by proponents who extol its value for enterprises that must meet rapidly changing market demands through teamwork, collaboration, and information sharing. However, the Irvine Performance Improvement Model demonstrates the foundational role of supervision in *enabling* teamwork, collaboration, and information sharing, since particular management behaviors directly foster workplace respect -- the necessary prerequisite to these patterns of workplace cooperation. (However, a self-directed work group could develop values and behaviors consistent with the Workplace Respect construct.)

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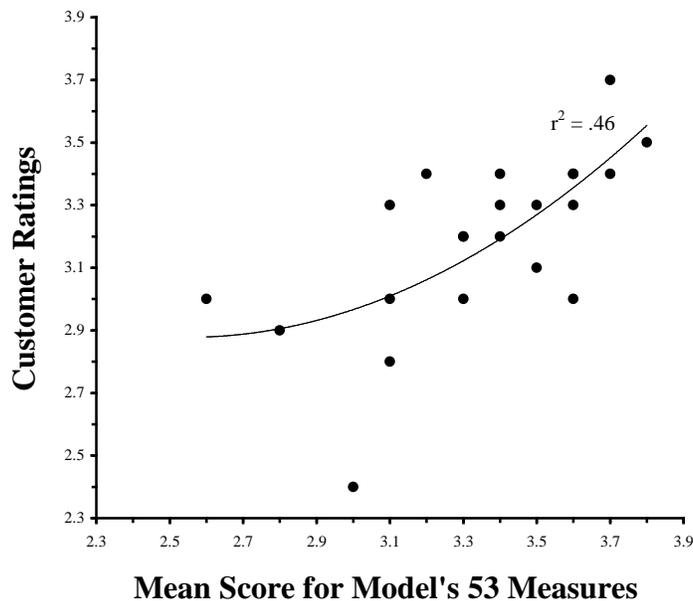
<sup>10</sup> No exceptions to this finding in 120 observations ( $p < .0001$ ).

<sup>11</sup> As noted earlier, partial correlations associated with other possible pathways all approach zero.

## Does the Model Predict Externally Validated Performance?

Do the model's performance measures forecast or correlate with *external* measures of customer satisfaction? This question is pivotal in establishing the true value of this model.

The following scattergram shows data points for departments and sub-units, based on a standardized annual customer satisfaction survey. It confirms that customer ratings do correlate with a unit's mean score on the model's fifty-three measures:



This evidence of external validation reduces concern that relationships revealed by the model may be a product of a Hawthorne-like, self-referencing, halo effect.

## Can Effective Management Behaviors Be or Learned?

Are the management behaviors that enable team performance learned skills or inborn personality traits? Most managers improved significantly when provided with data indicating how their supervisory behavior was experienced:

- by their employees,
- compared to *other* supervisors' ratings, and
- in relation to goals for each measured behavior.

These data are shared with employees and managers in a report that summarizes all fifty-three measures from the Survey of Management & Organizational Patterns. An abridged example is displayed on the following page (for an actual, high-performing department).



Because the model reveals that the way to attain Workplace Cooperation is by improving Workplace Respect, which in turn stems from Effective Management Behaviors, supervisors whose units score low (< 3.0) on any of these measures are coached to focus on the latter, rather than attempt to directly change Workplace Respect or Cooperation patterns, per se.

The Effective Management Behaviors measure is a sensitive predictor of Workplace Respect<sup>12</sup> -- sometimes providing an early diagnostic, as the measured effect is often lagged one year:

- When a unit's Effective Management Behaviors score drops as little as 0.2 (on a 4-point scale), Workplace Respect declines in the same or subsequent year ninety-one percent of the time.<sup>13</sup>
- Conversely, when the Effective Management Behaviors measure increases 0.2 or more, Workplace Respect *improves* in the same or subsequent year with eighty-nine percent consistency.<sup>14</sup>

These findings reinforce the conclusion that the way for a manager to reverse patterns of low workplace respect (and hence effectiveness and cooperation) is to focus on improving the nineteen Effective Management behaviors. These key behaviors matter more than any of the 150+ supervisory and managerial behaviors that were tested in the development of this model, including technical and knowledge-based skills, political savvy, analytic skills, and differing methods and styles of using authority, rewards, and disincentives.

The survey instrument (*Survey of Management and Organizational Patterns*) does not yield Effective Management Behavior scores for specific individuals (except by coincidence when an organizational unit is small). Rather, it measures the overall "management climate" as revealed by mean measures that encompass all supervisors in a unit. The *principal* manager understands that she or he is responsible for the management climate throughout the entire unit, and that the best way to improve this measure is to demonstrate, as well as to talk about and expect, the nineteen Effective Management behaviors (and to avoid the six Management Detractor behaviors). Thus, the survey instrument measures unit-wide managerial effectiveness rather than individual managers' performance, reinforcing the goal stated on the introductory page of the survey instrument: to "improve management practices and organizational effectiveness" through "assessing our organization's strengths and its weaknesses." The focus is on organization-wide learning and improvement, not individual performance evaluation.

Two "mini-case studies," which follow, illustrate how this performance improvement model helped two organizations improve their internal performance measures, process metrics, and customer ratings.

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<sup>12</sup> Based on longitudinal observation of units' (departments, sub-departments) scores and patterns over a three-year span using a consistent survey instrument.

<sup>13</sup> Thirty-one of thirty-four occurrences,  $p < .005$ .

<sup>14</sup> Twenty-four of twenty-seven occurrences,  $p < .005$ .

## Two Mini-Case Studies of Performance Improvement

**Department A** serves customers across the entire organization, providing specialized services in a highly regulated environment. Customer sentiment about this valued function can sour quickly as service or quality gaps create administrative and legal nightmares for managers. In other words, this is a high-stakes service that is extremely valuable to the larger organization when done well, and deeply problematic when service quality is low.

Over the past four years Department A has markedly improved its management and teamwork measures:

	<b>1999 Mean</b>	<b>2003 Mean</b>
Leadership and Management (31 measures)	3.3	3.6
Respect, Cooperation, and Effectiveness (22 measures)	3.1	3.6

Results from the Survey of Management & Organizational Patterns were used to improve management performance, and thus to improve workgroup-based teamwork and collaboration behaviors. Concurrently, the department launched several new initiatives that streamlined core services they deliver. One process improvement attracted national attention as a “best practice,” as reflected by these parameters:

	<b>Before Redesign</b>	<b>After Redesign</b>
Cycle-time	48 days	25 days
Medium	Paper forms	Web-based
Number of steps	6	1
Number of hand-offs	10	3
Number of approval-points	3	1
Document retrieval	10 days	3 seconds
Customer ratings	Some dissatisfaction	Widespread satisfaction

As management practices and team-based cooperation and effectiveness improved, other processes were similarly improved, and customer ratings improved substantially:

	<b>Ratings of How Consistently Customers’ Overall Expectations Met</b>			
	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Always</i>
<b>1998</b>	5%	15%	75%	5%
<b>2003</b>	0%	7%	46%	47%

**Department B's** range of customers and services is similar to that of Department A. Department B also functions in a highly regulated environment, and its customers expect fast, accurate, consistent service. Over the past four years Department B has improved its management and teamwork measures in a way that parallels Department A:

	<b>1999 Mean</b>	<b>2003 Mean</b>
Leadership and Management (31 measures)	3.2	3.5
Respect, Cooperation, and Effectiveness (22 measures)	3.0	3.4

Department B used results from the Survey of Management & Organizational Patterns to improve management performance, and hence cooperation and teamwork. During this period, leadership emerged from within Department B to streamline a major business process -- an endeavor involving two other departments and numerous customers, which blossomed due to exceptional levels of collaboration and teamwork. The redesigned process, recognized by EDUCAUSE with its Best Practices Award for (IT) Applications, is streamlined and efficient:

	<b>Before Redesign</b>	<b>After Redesign</b>
Cycle-time	10 days	3 days
Medium	Paper forms	Web-based
Number of steps	24	10
Number of hand-offs	7	4
Number of approval-points	2 or 3	1
Document tracking/retrieval	3 days	30 seconds
Customer ratings	Poor	Excellent

Similar to Department A, customer ratings improved remarkably over this same time interval:

	<b>Ratings of How Consistently Customers' Overall Expectations Met</b>			
	<i>Never</i>	<i>Seldom</i>	<i>Usually</i>	<i>Always</i>
<b>1998</b>	4%	26%	66%	4%
<b>2003</b>	1%	5%	64%	30%

**Several patterns are evident** in these mini-case studies: These organizations' reputations and customer ratings improved as management effectiveness measures and team-based effectiveness measures rose, in tandem, to a point where innovations were recognized as industry best practices. These are not subjective impressions, but empirical results constituting measured behaviors, learning that yielded measurable improvement on the part of both managers and workgroups, and standardized customer ratings. In most cases, key management and teamwork behaviors can be learned and change can be realized through goal setting, measurement, and feedback. In some cases, however, new leadership is required.

## The Essential Value of a *Behavioral* Model

Managers need to base their actions on a valid model of what employees believe and value and what motivates them, especially when innovation and improvement are needed by the enterprise. Intuition and common sense do not provide complete, reliable management insights. For example, without an empirical model, would it be obvious to a manager that rewarding behaviors that comprise the Workplace Cooperation or Workplace Effectiveness constructs might prove futile unless he/she *first* evidences behaviors that foster Workplace Respect -- the critical-path precursor revealed by the model? Without an empirical model, would it be apparent that teamwork and collaboration are almost impossible to develop absent mutual respect in the workplace, or that cooperation and effectiveness will plummet if workplace respect falls just slightly below a critical threshold, or that even a few Management Detractor behaviors can negate management effectiveness?

A validated model's worth stems from its ability to efficiently stimulate improved performance. Variables with little predictive value can be essentially ignored, enabling managers to concentrate on the factors most likely to produce results. In a workplace with limited time to invest in improvement, and given the imperative of uninterrupted production, the most efficient performance improvement model is the leanest, simplest one.

This performance improvement model -- a behavioral model -- provides the foundation element in a larger model, the *UC Irvine Model for Sustaining Administrative Improvement* (cited earlier). This broader improvement model adopted non-behavioral, as well as behavioral, goals and strategies:

- re-delegating approvals, authorizations, and decisions to the lowest level in the organization where the knowledge and concern exist to make the most informed and responsible decision;
- adopting a yearly agenda of customer-driven process streamlining projects;
- setting productivity benchmark goals for key services;
- utilizing simplification principles to improve the transparency, efficiency, and accountability of processes;
- realigning human resources policies that inherently (albeit inadvertently) thwart development of an "improvement culture"; and
- applying customer service, process improvement, and accountability principles.

The complete *Model for Sustaining Administrative Improvement* (<http://www.abs.uci.edu/>) lays out an agenda to change the administrative culture of a well-established bureaucracy. The behavioral model explained in this paper is its foundational element because simplification, streamlining, innovation, and continuous improvement require -- *first and foremost* -- improved collaboration, information sharing, teamwork, and willingness to assume and share responsibility for problems. And, as this performance improvement model demonstrates, these work group behaviors depend on management and leadership behaviors that foster the pivotal, critical-path factor: workplace respect. The administrative culture in an organization cannot be changed merely by improving everyone's technology, training employees to do process mapping, and getting them to recite a trendy dogma.

## Should You Adopt this Model?

If your enterprise's output is the summation of individuals' *independent* work products, you do not need this improvement model. However, if the value your enterprise creates depends on interdependencies, collaboration, team problem solving, shared expertise, and continual improvement, you need a robust performance improvement model.

The Irvine Performance Improvement Model illustrates how workplace respect and cooperation emerge from a foundation of management and leadership behaviors that can be expressed as clear performance expectations. Before implementing this or *any* behavioral model, examine the inherent values it embodies in order to determine whether they are valid in your organization. Every behavioral model contains embedded values (expressed or not) that will undermine implementation if they clash with mixed messages from other behavioral systems, such as the human resources system.

The Effective Management and Leadership behaviors in the model, the Workplace Respect measures, and the Workplace Cooperation principles are applied broadly and consistently by:

- adopting as individual performance expectations;
- reflecting in workgroup and unit performance objectives;
- valuing in mission statements;
- incorporating in teamwork workshops and management training;
- rewarding through formal and informal systems of recognition; as well as
- measuring through surveys that provide behavioral performance feedback to managers.

These behavioral foundations complement the “technical” features of a managed change model. The most valuable technical tools -- process redesign techniques, design principles, customer satisfaction and performance measurement systems, benchmarking, and quality standards -- remain ineffectual unless they are *catalyzed* by behavioral tools centered around employee beliefs, values, rewards, incentives, disincentives, and learning that supports continual performance improvement.

## ***Sustainable Performance Improvement***

Sustainable performance improvement requires an empirically validated model that is:

- simple, understandable, and memorable, so that managers and employees who want to improve their performance can adopt consistent, normative behaviors;
- internally coherent, avoiding mixed messages that might trigger a retreat back to the comfort of prior behavior patterns;
- compatible with other belief, value, and reward systems of both the formal and informal organization (notably, the human resources system); and

- capable of providing clear information about behaviors that can be improved through measurement, feedback, and learning.

The Irvine Performance Improvement Model demonstrates that particular management and leadership behaviors that are

- normative,
- measurable,
- understandable, and
- attainable

profoundly affect organizational effectiveness. The causal relationship is strong and clear. These behaviors do not affect enterprise performance *directly*, but rather through the critical-path, intermediating factors of Workplace Respect and Workplace Cooperation -- also definable, measurable constructs.

The Irvine Performance Improvement Model is humane and people-centered. It explains the central, critical, inescapable factor that stands between management endeavors and organizational effectiveness: workplace respect. This model is broadly applicable at all levels in an organization. It is simple and linear -- not situational, conditional, or difficult to understand and apply. Both the survey instrument and the measured results are understandable to a wide range of employees -- from service employees with limited formal education to professional staff with advanced degrees, across a wide variety of administrative functions. Finally and most important, consistent application of the Irvine Performance Improvement Model has shown that measurement and feedback regarding key, normative management and teamwork behaviors yield sustainable performance improvement.

Wendell C. Brase  
University of California, Irvine  
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## **SAMPLE SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

**To: All Employees**  
**Subject: Survey of Management and Organizational Patterns**

I would like to thank all of you who participated in recent years by completing the Survey of Management and Organizational Patterns. The values and patterns measured by this survey have helped us all to understand effective management practices and to improve organizational effectiveness.

We are once again assessing our organization's strengths and its weaknesses. This year the survey form is web-based and easier to complete (although you may request a hard-copy or Spanish-language survey if you prefer). Your views and experiences are important to include in this survey.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Your responses will remain anonymous, so please respond with complete honesty. Please respond to all questions for which you have an opinion. Only summarized (averaged, not individual) responses will be reported.

### **YOUR COMMENTS**

If this survey overlooks an issue that you think is an important factor in the performance of our organization, please express your views and concerns in the final, write-in question. Written comments will be summarized in a way that protects their confidentiality. Please do not include comments of a personal nature that cannot be summarized with the survey results.

### **HOW THE RESULTS WILL BE USED**

The goal behind this survey is to improve management practices and organizational effectiveness. Averaged responses will be summarized for each department and for the entire organization. Managers will provide summary results to all A&BS employees.

Thank you for taking the time to complete this brief survey. To begin survey, go to: <http://www.samplesurvey.edu/>

Wendell Brase  
Vice Chancellor

# SURVEY OF MANAGEMENT AND ORGANIZATIONAL PATTERNS

For all questions please select one, most applicable response.

1. People who look for better ways of doing things are respected and rewarded in my unit.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
2. I know about and understand the data my unit uses to measure its performance.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
3. While working with others in my unit on a group task, I feel that:  
 Everyone shares responsibility for the results  
 Only a few people are responsible for the results  
 Only the boss is responsible for the results
4. My co-workers and I experience a climate of mutual respect at all job levels.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree

The following questions pertain to your *work group* -- those with whom you work closely on a daily basis. Please select one, most applicable response:

5. In my work group a suggestion about the way we do things:  
 Is valued even if it's initially the wrong suggestion  
 Is welcome but had better be right the first time  
 Is not welcome
6. When work problems surface in my work group, my co-workers usually:  
 Produce information and ideas that help solve the problem  
 Say nothing; keep a low profile  
 Produce information that shows why they were not at fault
7. When faced with a setback or an unusually challenging problem my work group:  
 Experiences fewer interpersonal problems as we focus on the problem  
 Experiences more interpersonal problems that fragment our efforts
8. I can provide honest, constructive criticism to my work group about the way it functions without being penalized.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
9. I can share (work) problems without concern about appearing stupid to others in my work group.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree

10. In my work group we share a common set of goals.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
11. In my work group we embrace the same standards of effectiveness.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
12. In my work group we share common values of service, quality, and excellence.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
13. In my work group we share expertise when faced with a challenging task.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
14. In my work group we share leadership responsibilities and often hand off leadership roles from project to project.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
15. In my work group we wait for complaints before tackling a new problem.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
16. In my work group, people recognize and accept each other's strengths and weaknesses.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
17. In my work group, people consider it important that tasks be divided fairly.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
18. My work group continually improves its practices, productivity, and effectiveness.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
19. My work group is committed to meet the needs of our customers.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
20. My work group is efficient and productive.  
 Strongly disagree    Disagree somewhat    Agree somewhat    Strongly agree
21. In my work group, problems with the way we do our work are usually:  
 Ignored    Faced and attended to
22. In my work group, interpersonal conflicts are:  
 Ignored    Addressed and resolved
23. In my work group, differences of opinion about how to get the job done are:  
 Resolved using facts    Resolved using power

**The following strengths and weaknesses pertain to your supervisor -- the person to whom you directly report:**

24. My Supervisor....	Strongly disagree	Disagree somewhat	Agree somewhat	Strongly agree
Takes time to listen and understand my views	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Acts in ways that build respect in him/her	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Models the behavior he/she expects from others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Takes steps to improve bad relationships	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Values the experiences and perspectives of people from diverse backgrounds	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Finds "win-win" solutions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Appears self-confident	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Will try new, potentially better methods	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Remains confident despite setbacks	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Takes action to resolve interpersonal conflicts in his/her area of responsibility	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicates what he/she expects me to accomplish	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Talks optimistically about the future	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sorts essential from unimportant information	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaks convincingly when presenting to a group	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recruits and promotes fairly regardless of race, gender, sexual orientation, or age	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Maintains consistency between words and actions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conveys a strong commitment to goals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Communicates an inspiring vision for change	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Involves me in important decisions	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recognizes that my needs and abilities differ from others	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Learns from his/her mistakes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Treats new ideas with respect	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

My supervisor...	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree somewhat</b>	<b>Agree somewhat</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
Provides feedback when I share my ideas	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Rewards initiative	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Discourages my bringing up problems	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Makes me feel stupid when we disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Favors an “in group” of subordinates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loses his/her temper under pressure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Makes some people look good at others’ expense	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Waits until a problem escalates before acting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

25. How effective is your unit, in terms of quality and productivity, compared to its *potential*?

- We perform at 95-100 percent of our potential -- consistently excellent
- We perform at 90-95 percent of our potential – usually very good
- We perform at 60-90 percent of our potential – consistently better than average
- We perform at less than 60 percent of our potential – average or below average

26. In your opinion, what is the one, main reason your unit performs at less than 100 percent of its potential?

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*Thank you for participating in the Survey of Management and Organizational Patterns.*

**WENDELL C. BRASE** is vice chancellor for Administrative and Business Services at the University of California, Irvine. With 30 years of experience in the UC system (13 years at UC Santa Cruz, 17 years at Irvine) he is responsible for UC Irvine's administrative, financial, and business services. Mr. Brase is a member of NACUBO's Sustainability Advisory Panel and is Chair of the University of California's Climate Solutions Steering Group.

UC Irvine's Administrative and Business Services have been cited with eleven national awards for process improvement, innovation, and administrative streamlining, including first prize in NACUBO's Higher Education Awards Program (1996), Best Practices Award from CAUSE (1997), the *USA Today* Quality Cup Award (1998), and the EDUCAUSE Award for Excellence in Administrative Information Systems (2004).