

# How to get promoted

## Human factors in hierarchical organisations

**How business evolves through random decisions**

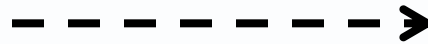
“Interesting... funny... true”

# Promotion in a business

▶ Promotion in the management hierarchy

▶ Differs from

▶ Promotion on the basis of technical experience and competence in operational roles



How do I get to join this club?



Level	Role A	Role B	Role C
Senior			
Middle			
Junior			

# Have you wondered

- ▶ Why you haven't yet been promoted to the level your analytical talents merit?
- ▶ How managers who make bad decisions came to be promoted above you?



# Many others have wondered

- ▶ The Peter Principle,
  - ▶ The Dilbert Principle and
  - ▶ Parkinson's Law
- 
- ▶ They are amusing
  - ▶ Moreover, they are on to something that deserves serious investigation.

## Is this cynical advice for the careerist?

- ▶ Explaining how hierarchies work leads inexorably to what seems a cynical view - a set of principles you can use for your own advancement.



- ▶ There is advice on how to obtain and hold a senior position in a large organisation – a position that suits your personal interest, whether or not it suits the organisation's interest.

## Or is this serious advice for the manager?

- ▶ The aim is not to make a value judgement. Only to look at the effects of human nature on the workings of a management hierarchy.



- ▶ And there are pointers on making big decisions, estimating, risk management, and references you can follow up.

# This work is half humorous, half serious.

- ▶ But the humorous half is half serious.
- ▶ So that makes it three quarters serious.

# What is your experience?

- ▶ Directors approach a big decision with dispassionate and painstaking analysis?
- ▶ Or
- ▶ Directors start with an instinctive, intuitive, decision (influenced by emotions and self-interest) and then use misleading arguments or irrelevant facts to dispose of any argument standing in the way of deciding as they want?
- ▶ Frequent observations of the latter – in both public and private sector organisations - prompted us to look more deeply.



# How does this management style succeed?

- ▶ Does it have something to do with how promotion in a hierarchical organisation works?



- ▶ If we understand the mindset of top-level directors and politicians, and how they make a decision, then will we know how to reach the same position?

## What do we mean by ‘top’?

- ▶ In the public sector, the top is the politicians who direct civil servants.
- ▶ In the private sector, the top is the board of directors, who make the biggest decisions, along with managers at the next level down, who are also expected to make big decisions, and to have and to promote new ideas.



- ▶ But “top” here extends to those people who report to the above, without responsibility for making big decisions.

# What leads to success?

- ▶ Best-selling books on management (like *In Search of Excellence*) study successful companies.
- ▶ The usual assumption is that business success is down to the quality of manager's decision making.
- ▶ How to square this with our everyday experience, even in successful organisations, that managers regularly make ill-judged decisions?

- ▶ Some like to compare the battle for survival between enterprises in a competition with each other with the race for survival between species.
- ▶ We consider the race for promotion in the same light, and consider management decisions as gambles.



- ▶ We will apply the theory of evolution to the factors at work in promotion of managers.

## Is this a satire?

- ▶ Our advice to the careerist can be read as cynical.
- ▶ But it is also a collection of serious observations.
- ▶ The principles we identify are neither good nor bad; they are merely the natural consequences of evolutionary forces and human nature.



- ▶ You, the reader, may choose whether you use the principles to your advantage or decry them.

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