

Management

A Critical Text

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Preface

In 1992, Liz Fulop, Faye Frith and Harold Hayward collaboratively edited a book called *Management for Australian Business: A Critical Text*. The present book began as an attempt to update the content of that book for students of the next century. In the original preface the editors said:

It goes without saying that there is nothing simple about management. There never was; nor should there be. Too much is at stake. This book is written with the firm conviction that to become a successful and clever manager involves mastering much more than a few simple 'recipes' or 'easy steps' for performing management functions ... the function of a management textbook should be to equip managers with enduring skills and knowledge that will help them cope with the complexity and ambiguity that await them in their daily endeavours. The book places a premium on developing critical thinking and analytical capacities that can be successfully applied to any management situation ... an understanding of management is not enhanced by uncritical 'one best way' approaches.

As we looked at the ideas that had animated the first book, what became strikingly obvious was, first, that taking such a critical approach to management was more important than ever and, second, that the market was no better served in this regard than it had been when the first book was written. But things had changed, and changed considerably. A focus on Australian business seemed parochial to the point of absurdity in the context of globalization. What managers of the future would need was an early exposure to ideas and cases from a number of cultures and contexts – the USA, Europe, and the Asia–Pacific in particular. Similarly, learning had moved so much to centre stage in the consideration of how organizations and managers could remain effective that it demanded more extensive and up-front consideration. Diversity as a topic was now more significant than it had ever been, and though all of the material in the book needed to be revisited in this light, the issue of gender could no longer be marginalized but demanded focused treatment. In addition, the growth of a concern with ethics, which was once an optional feature of most programmes, was increasingly being recognized as a foundational element of a critical approach to management.

As we reviewed what needed to be done, we came to realize that the first book, which we had felt was quite radical in its time, was looking more and more conservative – and we more critical than ever! What was needed was a rethinking of many of our assumptions and a reframing of some of the core issues – like power, leadership, motivation – that remain at the heart of studies of management. Some topics, such as interorganizational relations and teamworking, were so clearly a part of ways of working of the future, and could no longer be dismissed as transitory fashions, that they required proper treatment in their own right, and not as part of a broader and more synoptic consideration.

We had followed the collaborative approach of the original book, with a wider range of

specialist international contributors, and as the earliest contributions came in, and we began to edit them, we realized that we had a book which was far more original in its approach than we had perhaps expected. We followed the path opened up – in particular by Robin Snell and Joanna Brewis – and returned to our other authors with a renewed challenge, but with a commitment to work with them to achieve our end of producing a text which was very different from the one they had been asked to write. They took up our offer and readers will note that one or other of us is credited on most of the chapters – and we hope that they will also recognize the benefits of that collaboration in the consistency of approach throughout the book as a whole.

The cases in this book are all substantial, which is connected with the fact that we chose to exemplify our approach to case analysis in the text rather than in the instructor's guide accompanying it.

Thanks are due to all of our co-authors, for the hard work they put in, for the critical scrutiny they endured, and in some cases for putting up with phone calls that arrived in the middle of the night – one of the perils of collaborating to meet deadlines across time zones! Thanks are also due to our students on the MBA and BCom programmes at the University of Wollongong for their responses to the material in this book as we refined it in classes between 1995 and 1998. Leonie Kirchmajer was responsible for the background bibliographical research – which she did with exceptional efficiency and good humour. Barbara McGoldrick of the Department of Management at the University of Wollongong provided us with much needed administrative support throughout numerous drafts and revisions well beyond the call of duty. Lynne Read also pitched in when deadlines were looming. Lea Green typed most of the manuscript, and when disaster in the form of a computer virus struck, retyped most of it too. We can't express our gratitude sufficiently for Lea's unflappable support and good humour throughout the production of the book, and particularly during that period when everything seemed to be falling apart. Jennifer Coombs copy edited the book in record time, working late into the night and often taking corrections over the phone. She showed great patience and consideration when we were particularly testy.

We owe thanks to Peter Debus of Macmillan, who initially urged Liz to pursue a second edition of the first book, and then courageously accepted our proposal to produce a quite different one. We also thank Sue McGuinn, who took over the responsibility for the project just around the time the virus epidemic reached Wollongong, and must have wondered for a time whether a manuscript would ever appear, for her patience and diligence, and for her sensitivity in leaving us alone when we needed it.

Finally, it is often the case that when you collaborate on a major project with a colleague you haven't worked with very closely before, the stresses and strains of the process drive you even further apart. Sometimes, if you're fortunate, you come out of it with an enhanced respect for each other's talents and professionalism. And even more rarely, you discover a friendship that makes even the most torrid of labours a pleasure. We were very lucky in this regard, and we hope that some of the enjoyment we got from crafting these ideas together shows through the words on the page – and that you will enjoy reading the book too.

Liz Fulop and Stephen Linstead
Wollongong and Sunderland, June 1998.

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Liz Fulop is responsible for the theoretical orientation, content, editing and layout of Chapter 11. Ewa and Alan Buttery contributed principally to the sections on the rise of networks, classification of networks (excluding the material on learning network), power dimensions of networks, and some aspects of issues in networking and cross-cultural dimensions. They have drawn on ideas from their previously published book *Business Networks* (Melbourne: Longman Business and Professional).

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