

William Reddin

Mastering matters of management

Denis Ryan

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William "Bill" Reddin, who has died at the age of 69, was one of the world's leading behavioural scientists and a management guru with 23 books to his name, many of them bestsellers. He changed the face of management style, and *The Output Orientated Manager* and *Managerial Styles Made Effective* were translated into more than a dozen languages. Such a distinguished future could hardly have been predicted from his beginnings.

The son of a show-business father, Reddin was born in London and attended 10 different schools between the ages of five and 14, before leaving to work in a factory. Here he earned enough money to emigrate to Canada and join his married sister. After working his way through college, he graduated in psychology, sociology and economics at the University of New Brunswick. Reddin always maintained these were his main disciplinary interests. After an MBA from Harvard Business School, he took a Sloan doctoral fellowship at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and then a PhD at Bradford University.

Reddin was influenced at MIT by Douglas McGregor, who wrote the classic *The Human Side Of Enterprise*. He had distinguished between the "theory-x manager", who concentrated on productivity, and the "theory-y manager", whose main concern was for people.

Reddin's own work on managerial style and managerial situations led him towards flexibility of style with the aim of "effectiveness". By realising that a third dimension of management theory could be used, as well as a closer analysis of different management styles, he came up with the now famous 3-D management model. For Reddin, there was no one ideal style of management: he argued that "you must match style to situation". Academic interest in the managerial styles of the 3-D theory was huge, with more than 50 doctoral dissertations on the subject in the United States alone.

In 1969, Reddin became dean of the University of New Brunswick Business School, and his home in Fredericton became open house for students and scholars alike. Then, in 1974, after 17 years as a leading academic, he left that world to put his action-oriented ideas into practice through his own consulting firm, WJ Reddin and Associates.

His clients included some of America's leading multi-nationals - Kodak, Westinghouse and Ford - and, now known simply as Bill Reddin, he developed considerable expertise in designing seminars and managerial tests, which proved increasingly popular as training methods to achieve increased management effectiveness.

Reddin would insist that the only job of a manager was to be "effective", a role defined by him as "meeting the output requirements of his position". He was forthright in declaring, of performance standards, his adage that "if you can't measure it, forget it, because no one will know anyway." He suggested that managers should strive to reach the point where they "whistle on the way to work".

One of his most frequent pieces of advice to the top person in an organisation was to get rid of their desk. When the owner of an air-conditioning firm took him at his word, he was pleased to hear that the firm's profits doubled two years in succession. An unusual requirement of his worldwide contracts was that clients should set aside part of their fee to enable an independent doctoral student to monitor the assignment. "It keeps us both honest," he said.

Reddin gave his services to many voluntary organisations, including a suicide lifeline and conservation trusts, and he filled his London flat with prisoners' art, bought to encourage their recovery. He is survived by his wife, two daughters and his sister, Valerie.

William James 'Bill' Reddin, behavioural scientist and management expert, born May 10, 1930; died June 20, 1999