Managing in the Modern Corporation

In recent years, widespread organisational change in large corporations has almost invariably led to work intensification and increased stress for managers. Managing in the Modern Corporation explains how and why large companies have changed their organisational structures and philosophies, focusing in particular on how these changes affect the careers of middle managers. Based on in-depth interviews with over 200 middle and senior managers working in large corporations in the USA, the UK and Japan, it shows how the working lives of managers have been subjected to major disruption, involving work intensification and reduced opportunities for career progression. Furthermore, it argues that such widespread overwork and poor treatment of highly skilled and highly motivated staff has created a major international problem that must be addressed. The book discusses a range of solutions to this significant problem, suggesting that there are possibilities for saner, less brutal organisational environments.

John Hassard is Professor of Organisational Analysis at Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, and Fellow in Management Learning at the Judge Business School, University of Cambridge. Professor Hassard has published thirteen books, over a hundred research articles and received a large number of awards from UK research councils. He is currently a council member of the Society for the Advancement of Management Studies.

Leo McCann is Lecturer in International and Comparative Management at Manchester Business School, University of Manchester. He has conducted qualitative research in many large firms across several countries, from transitional to highly developed economies. He has published a number of articles on the subject of white-collar work in journals such as Human Relations, Journal of Management Studies and Organization Studies.

Jonathan Morris is Professor of Organisational Analysis and Head of the Human Resource Management Section at Cardiff Business School, Cardiff University. He has written a number of books on human resource management and employment studies and regularly publishes in journals such as Organization Studies, Journal of Management Studies, Public Administration and Human Relations.
Managing in the Modern Corporation

The Intensification of Managerial Work in the USA, the UK and Japan

JOHN HASSARD,
LEO McCANN
AND
JONATHAN MORRIS
For Roisin, Kate and Catherine
Contents

Acknowledgements ix
About the cover x

1 Going under the knife: Downsizing and de-layering the modern corporation 1
   How much corporate change? 8
   Why restructure? 15
   Assessing the impacts of restructuring on middle managers 21
   Who are the middle managers? And why study them? 24
   Restructuring public administration: Different roots, similar outcomes 34
   Conclusions 35

2 Exploring corporate life: A realist view on management restructuring 39
   Theorising the organisation and control of managerial labour 43

3 Living in the house that Jack built: Management restructuring in America 55
   USRecruit: ‘You had a job for life, even if you stunk’ 62
   USElectronics: ‘Cutting and caring’ 69
   USBank2: ‘Love and trust in the matrix’ 85
   UKAuto: ‘Not empowered, just more responsible’ 95
   US Engineering: ‘Every day is a final exam’ 110
   Conclusions 121

4 Maximising shareholder value: Management restructuring in Britain 124
   UKAuto: ‘What is the rationale? The rationale is saving fucking money!’ 129
   UKUtilities: ‘We are here to make money for shareholders’ 141
   UKInsurance: ‘Managing in a “one per cent environment”’ 151

vii
| UKBank: ‘There is life beyond it, but you don’t think that at the time’ | 165 |
| Conclusions | 174 |
| 5 New world of the salaryman: Management restructuring in Japan | 175 |
| JAutoComps and JAutoGroup: ‘Managing the cost-down strategy’ | 187 |
| JElectronics: ‘A difficult economic scenario’ | 203 |
| JEngineering: ‘Increasing the per capita activity’ | 206 |
| JSteel: ‘Many ranks and layers just flattened’ | 209 |
| JUSBank: ‘In Japanese companies they’ve got boys’ jobs and girls’ jobs’ | 215 |
| Conclusions | 223 |
| 6 Fighting back? Addressing the human costs of management restructuring | 228 |
| The human costs of change: Overwork, stress and anxiety | 229 |
| The modern corporation: Increased pressure, heightened tension | 232 |
| Resisting the new organisational ideology | 239 |
| The limits of ‘responsible restructuring’ | 245 |
| Restoring the dignity of managerial work | 250 |
| Conclusions | 255 |

Appendix

References

Index
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the 251 executives, managers and supervisors in private and public sector organisations in Japan, the UK and the USA who volunteered to be interviewed in the course of this study. Without their help and cooperation this research would not have been possible. We would also like to thank the Economic and Social Research Council of the UK for funding the first three years of research. The research was entitled ‘Management and New Organizational Forms: Middle Management in the UK, USA and Japan’, (R000239288). Without this funding we would not have been able to complete the fieldwork in large-scale organisations on which this book is largely based. Our sincere thanks also go to Ms Seiko Kubo of the Japan Local Government Center for arranging access to several of our case study organisations in Japan. We would also like to thank Professor Yuji Yamasaki of the University of Kitakyushu and Professor Hirokuni Tabata of the University of Tokyo for their advice on the subject of Japanese organisational change and for the assistance they gave us with access to companies. Finally we would like to thank Sue Haffner of the Manchester Business School, University of Manchester, for her assistance in assembling the final manuscript.
About the cover

In seeking a suitable cover graphic for the book, we scanned literally hundreds of images on various websites; in the end we picked a simple paper-chain. As some readers may have guessed, this was chosen to resonate with the book that provides much of the inspiration for our study, Harry Braverman’s *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century* (1974/1998), the cover of which features a similar paper-chain design. However, whereas Braverman’s paper-chain from the 1970s is continuous and strong, ours of the new century is divided and weak: in contrast to Braverman’s intact and united workforce, ours has been downsized and restructured.