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Management as a Liberal Art: A Response to the Challenges of Our Age

C. William Pollard

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Management as a Liberal Art
A Response to the Challenges of Our Age
Summary for the IPA Session in New York
March 17-18, 2014

“Management is, by itself, a liberal art. It has to be... Precisely because the object of management is a human community held together for a common purpose by the work bond.” Peter Drucker*

Management as a liberal art:

- Acknowledges how history, philosophy, anthropology, psychology, literature, music, art, religion, and faith have all contributed to our understanding of the human condition.
- Recognizes that our human nature can know the difference between right and wrong, produce good or evil and has a spiritual dimension.
- Raises the questions of who we are, where we have come from, where we are going, and who is our ultimate source of moral authority and truth.
- Is about who people are becoming in their work environment, not just what they are doing.
- Requires an alignment of what people ought to do with what they are paid to do.
- Requires leaders
 - to know what they believe and why they believe it;
 - to know where they are going and why it is important for people to follow;
 - to assume responsibility for the growth and development of the whole person not just a pair of hands producing an economic result;
 - to overcome the arrogance of title and position by serving those they lead;
 - to create a work environment that not only produces profitable and meaningful results but also becomes a moral community for the development of human character;
 - to accept the responsibility and the reality that a leader has only one choice to make, to lead or mislead.

“Since management deals with people and not with things management without values, commitments, and convictions can only do harm.

Saint Bonaventure said ‘All knowledge leads back to the source of All Light and to the knowledge of ultimate truth.’ The spirit of Saint Bonaventure’s short sentence must animate all we do if management is to have results.” Peter Drucker*

*These quotes are taken from a talk Drucker gave in 1987 when it was announced by Claremont Graduate University that its business school would be named the Drucker School of Management.