

A film director's approach to managing creativity

Eileen Morley and Andrew Silver

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A film director's approach to managing creativity

Eileen Morley and
Andrew Silver

The ways a film director encourages his actors to perform can be as effective in managing creative projects in business

When a film director says "action" and the actors and technicians begin a take, what is happening? To most of us, "action" simply means Hollywood. But to the actors and technicians, "action" means "get to work." Despite their glamor, film units are work systems. Their purpose is the production of a film—a task that relies on talented people banding together for a short time. In many ways, film units are similar to scientific and consulting projects; their success depends on getting the right personnel, enabling them to begin working together well and quickly, motivating them, leading them to create on schedule, and handling the stresses that working in isolation can create. The authors studied a film being made and how the director created his product and handled these problems. The film they studied was *Night Moves* (1975). The director was Arthur Penn, who is

probably best known for his films *Bonnie and Clyde* (1967), *Little Big Man* (1970), and *Missouri Breaks* (1976). Gene Hackman, who won an Academy Award for *The French Connection*, starred in the film.

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Photograph courtesy of Warner Bros. Inc.

When someone mentions a film unit, most people think of location shooting—depending on their generation it's either Robert Shaw duelling the shark off Martha's Vineyard or John Wayne and the U.S. cavalry charging through Death Valley! But, in fact, most major films are made in a series of predictable phases, of which shooting is only one.

In each phase of a film's production a group of people collaborate to form a miniature work organization which has characteristic problems of motivation, leadership, and structure. Each phase is a temporary system, limited in duration and membership, in which people come together, interact, create something, and then disband. And in each phase, the director has to stimulate and manage different kinds of creative work under intense budget and time pressures. The director's principal job is managing the creative process.

In this article we use the word "creativity" to mean technical as well as artistic creativity, realizing that this will overlap what others define as innovation. The notion of creativity is important because there is a high correlation between temporariness and creativity, and between permanence and routine. Most temporary organizations, such as film units or project teams, exist to develop an idea, a plan, a product, or a service, or to make something happen such as a trip to the moon or a bicentennial celebration. When groups or teams have completed their

Author's note: We wish to express our warm thanks to Arthur Penn for encouraging this research, and for allowing us to describe this work.

task, they dissolve. In contrast, permanent organizations exist to carry out a relatively repetitive manufacturing or service task for which there is a continuing need.

Because film units are temporary creative systems, they have much in common with technical or scientific projects, consulting teams, task forces, and other short-term task groups. For this reason observations about the film unit we studied should be relevant to managers of such groups.

Film units go through three main phases. Each involves different people, tasks, and locations. Only the director, producer, and script writer stay with the process from start to finish. But before anything can begin, a deal has to be made—a package of writer (and script), a director, and “bankable” star, all of whom are committed, and whose commitment forms the basis of the deal. Putting the package together is like developing a proposal; getting the package financed is akin to getting the contract. Once this has happened, the film unit comes into existence.

The first phase (preproduction) consists of script development, production planning, casting, and hiring. The preproduction team is usually small, consisting mainly of people who are close to and trusted by the director.

The production phase involves the actual shooting of the film. This phase usually has a visible social structure and culture of its own. People are separated into occupational groups or subsystems: actors, camera crew, lighting crew, sound crew, and so on. They are also divided into two levels: “above-the-line” and “below-the-line.” The line is literally a line on a budget sheet. The main philosophic difference between the groups is in their sense of responsibility. Above-the-line people tend to be committed to the film as a whole. They include the “management group” (producer, director, and script writer), and the key actors. Below-the-line people, such as members of the technical crews, carpenters, drivers, and so on, tend to be committed only to a particular aspect of the film.

The postproduction phase begins when the production group has disbanded. It includes picture and sound editing and recording and synchronizing of music and other sound effects. Usually the postproduction phase resembles the preproduction one in that during each a small group of people work in close contact with one another and the director.

There is usually also a subsequent marketing phase, but since the parent studio organization carries this out after completion of the film and the film unit itself is not involved, we did not include it in our study.

Most temporary projects go through an analogous series of phases. The people who plan and recruit an operation are not necessarily the ones who implement or lead it, nor again are the ones who implement it the ones who follow up, or even clean up. The most useful way to analyze the phases is by examining membership. Who belongs? At what time and for what purpose does each person belong? For how long? Which sets of people *have* to work well together? How will people be grouped and how will they group themselves? How will the groupings change as the project moves from phase to phase?

Few managers think about the systems they lead as social organizations of this kind, or about the key roles and interfaces between individuals, groups, and levels. However, the structural characteristics of a work system have a great influence on communication and collaboration. People who work together or see each other informally tend to exchange information and form relationships—people who come on line before or after each other, or who work in separate buildings, do not.

In this article we describe the life cycle of the film unit, and consider in more detail some of the processes and problems that are common to the management of any temporary system.

Planning the film

The film we studied was *Night Moves*, directed by Arthur Penn and starring Gene Hackman and Susan Clark. The preproduction of *Night Moves* took place in Los Angeles, where a small “family” group worked in contiguous offices with much face-to-face contact and informal consultation. Hours were long and the atmosphere was very personal, much like the atmosphere of any small group getting together to start up a new project.

One of the main tasks of the preproduction group was to recruit people for the crucial production phase to follow. Recruiting of actors was more than un-

usually important because Arthur Penn's concept of film making centers on creating and filming an authentic spontaneous happening in the acting process; not on capturing the repetition of some previously rehearsed behavior. Because it was critical to find actors who could really give Penn what he wanted, Gene Lasko, the associate producer, did the casting, instead of leaving it up to a casting agency or the casting department of the parent company, as usually happens.

Four main actors were chosen to go through screen tests, which Penn used to generate photographic data that he could examine at leisure in making casting decisions. Penn was interested in the actors' professional competence and style; their stamina, patience, and willingness to follow instructions; their ability to remain spontaneous after ten takes of the same few lines of dialogue; their response to stress and fatigue; and their reactions to his way of working, which differs from that of many directors. The screen tests enabled him to make an in-depth assessment of the actors before committing himself.

Robert Sherman, the producer, and Tom Schmidt, the production manager, recruited the technical personnel, also with great care. They hired some of the technical personnel in groups. For instance, the directors of photography, lighting, and sound brought their own crews with them. Sherman and Schmidt were not only seeking people with professional competence, but also people with the ability to commit themselves quickly to a short project, and to tolerate stress ("Don't take him; he gets upset and lays it on everyone else").

They looked for people known to have a helpful, responsible attitude ("If I help him, they'll bend over even more to help me"). Most of all they wanted people who would not get "uptight." All these qualities were explored through firsthand knowledge, word-of-mouth reputation, and conversations with other people in the business. Sherman and Schmidt's search for people with the correct qualities was more persistent than is customary in business or industrial recruiting.

Because the film industry is based almost completely on temporary systems, and because the success of any film depends at least as much on compatibility and interpersonal skills as on technical performance, the emphasis on interpersonal compatibility was taken for granted by everyone. This emphasis is not likely to be so evident in a business or industrial situation where the norms and cultural expectations

have been drawn from traditional permanent organizations which value technical above interpersonal competence.

The project manager who sensibly tries to assess the people he is recruiting in terms of their compatibility and tolerance for stress may have to develop a language in which to communicate his inquiries. "Does so-and-so ever lose his temper? How does he behave then?" "Is she sensitive and responsive to other people's feelings?" "How does he react when he's given an impossible workload or conflicting instructions?" "Does she have a sense of humor?" "Does the quality of his work deteriorate badly under pressure?" "Can she see someone else's point of view?"

Managers who attempt to broaden their recruiting procedures in this way encounter occasional criticism of their "hairsplitting" or "inappropriately personal" questions. Inquiries of this kind can usually only be made in a phone call or face-to-face conversation with a previous supervisor, who in turn may have difficulty in formulating a reply, even if he or she is trying to do so. Exploring how people stack up on these counts is extremely time-consuming, but it is as essential to high-pressure technical projects as it is to a film unit if the project is to have the best chance of success.

In the business world there is no equivalent of the screen tests which Penn used to evaluate the people he was proposing to hire. Permanent organizations do employ people "on probation," but in temporary systems there is rarely time for this. Nonetheless, it is possible for a manager or section leader to keep a close eye on the more critical members of the team during the project's early days; to set particular technical or interpersonal tasks for them; to see how they respond; and to make an early decision to terminate those who do not measure up. Selection and early testing are even more important, simply because there will not be time to find and train a substitute later on.

Unfortunately, business people are more ready to accept lack of technical ability than lack of interpersonal skill as a reason for replacing someone. Business people tend to cling to the notion that somehow a good manager should be able to turn a difficult or unsatisfactory subordinate around. But on short-term projects managers usually do not have the time to help people go through a process of change. At the same time, however, it is important that they find the time to acknowledge the skills and contributions of the more effective people early,

so that these people quickly feel valued and committed to the task.

The shooting

Night Move's production phase, in which about 70 people were involved, took place in studios in Los Angeles and on location in Florida. The shift from preproduction to production was a substantial one. From being a small group with informal close relationships, the unit metamorphosed into a much larger organization with a more complex structure. Different subgroups had to be brought into working relationships. Different levels of understanding about what the director wanted had to be brought into equilibrium. Strangers had to become colleagues and perhaps friends.

During the production phase of a film unit there are five main areas of concern that are common to all creative temporary systems. These include the need for people to get into a relationship quickly with the task and with each other; the cultivation of enthusiasm and commitment; the encouragement of creativity; the question of an effective leadership style on the part of the group's head; and the effective management of stress and conflict.

Working relationships

Everyone in the film industry is used to moving into a new production, and takes it for granted that he or she must cultivate working relationships fast. Because they had done it often before, most people in the unit we studied were very skillful at this. In addition, Penn's preference for preproduction rehearsal, as well as certain other structural aspects of the work, helped people get to know each other quickly.

Penn had scheduled a week of rehearsal time at the end of the preproduction phase, which was an unusual thing to do. During production, actors would not all work together at the same time. The rehearsal week had enabled Penn and the cast to experience themselves as a team. It gave actors the chance to learn and develop confidence in Penn's way of working without being under the pressure of the shooting schedule. Actors thought this rehearsal was so im-

portant that they agreed to work the rehearsal week at the union scale of pay, which was far below the salary rate for which they had contracted to do the rest of the film.

Another characteristic which accelerates the team process is the isolation that is typical of the studio production process, and which Penn particularly insisted on during rehearsal week. People worked intensively together without any interruptions for hours at a time. The isolation increased concentration on the task and the intensity of personal interaction. It enabled a great deal of work to be done in a relatively short time. This way of working is very stimulating to participants, but it is also extremely tiring. Such intensity can usually be maintained only for short periods and is, therefore, best scheduled immediately before the main task is to begin.

On any project, the development of task familiarity and good working relationships takes a formal commitment of time and money. Usually this process calls for the manager's active participation, not only because of his or her central involvement in the project, but also because, as a signal from management, this will show that the process itself is to be taken seriously. For instance, no ringing phone ever broke people's concentration during rehearsal week. Penn had forbidden all telephone calls during working hours, including his own.

In the business and industrial world, initial socialization of this kind is often skimped or neglected. The process can be formal or informal and can center on task and on personal working relationships or both. Formal task-centered sessions such as orientations, briefings, planning meetings, and so on, give people a chance to develop a sense of their manager as a person, of his or her expectations and concepts of the project, of his or her ways of working. Unless they have had a chance to discuss the task with each person, managers cannot assume that people know what is expected of them.

It is harder to specify what the informal opportunities are for socialization in any particular group. "Shooting the breeze" in the early days of a project is often a valuable way of developing relationships, and is not simply time-wasting, even though it may look like it. All temporary systems tend to build up their own mini-culture of jokes, language, and shared experiences which can only happen as people interact. In the film unit production phase, the mini-cultures developed automatically during the two meals a day that people ate together, and in the

waiting periods between setups. Other temporary systems don't have such useful interstices of time built into their structure. Socializing has to occur in other ways, such as at lunch, in carpools, in conversations in the washroom, or around the water cooler.

Sometimes wives and husbands also need to be involved in temporary projects, particularly if later periods of stress are predictable. At these times workers will need support and understanding from spouses of whom they've seen too little. Because it is relatively easy for the husband or wife of an actor or cameraman to understand the product, film units have a distinct advantage over technical projects in this respect. On projects where the work is either classified or incomprehensible to the layperson, managers may need to make special efforts to involve spouses.

Last, but certainly not least, is the matter of the local organizational climate. Management does not always accept the fact that time for people to develop good relationships is an appropriate use of resources. Even where it is accepted, some methods will be more acceptable and seem more natural than others, both in the organization at large and among the people who are being recruited to the temporary project. If the idea of such preparation is completely unusual, the group may have to adopt a low profile to prevent its appearing either to be an elite or in need of special nursing.

Once a manager has developed a sense of the likely structure of his temporary system, he or she can plan much of this socialization process in the abstract. When the group convenes, he or she can make readjustments according to the specific characteristics of the people who have been recruited or assigned to the project.

Sources of motivation

The film director has none of the rewards and penalties traditionally available to the manager of a permanent system. Because so many above-the-line people are indispensable to completion of the film, the director cannot usually transfer or terminate them, and because the roles and responsibilities have been contracted in advance, he or she cannot promote or give raises or improve fringe benefits.

For *Night Moves*, indispensability was highest and most obvious in the case of Gene Hackman, the

star, whose life throughout production was insured for the cost of the film to date. But indispensability was not limited to actors. In the technical area, even the footage shot by the regular director of photography had a different look from footage shot by a subordinate while the director was sick.

Managers of all temporary systems share many of these constraints. Many project managers do influence the later careers of staff who continue to work in the same organization in their periodic performance evaluations. But managers do not usually have full administrative authority for raises or terminations. On complex technical tasks, a good many people may be indispensable, either because their expertise is irreplaceable or because tight schedules and deadlines mean there is no time to replace them. In these circumstances, the project manager, like the film director, must depend on four sources of motivation:

1
A sense of professionalism—By this we mean commitment to the standards for task and personal behavior set by professional peers inside and outside the system. Where the manager shares the same standards or those of a closely related discipline, he or she can often act as a natural pace-setter.

2
The basic need to exercise competence—The opportunity to use existing knowledge, to develop ideas, and to learn something new, gives most people a sense of competence and satisfaction, which in turn strengthens their motivation. However, the opportunity to exercise competence requires a fairly precise definition of the job, a good match with the individual's capabilities, and a reasonable workload.

When people are struggling with a job for which they are not sufficiently qualified, it is difficult for them to feel confident or competent. When people are in an idle waiting period, which creates boredom, when they are so overworked that they don't have time to do anything well, or when they are uncertain about what is expected of them, then their motivation also drops. A workflow that is even in volume and that only somewhat exceeds present capabilities is the ideal (though many project managers who read this will view this ideal as the antithesis of their own experience).

Workflow planning is at least as critical in temporary systems as in permanent ones. In planning *Night Moves*, the producer had budgeted shooting

Three directors' approaches to film making

Film directors view the creative process in one of two ways: either as something they carefully work out in advance or as something they improvise as they go along. The form and content of the film can be more or less fixed in either of the three phases of preproduction, production, or postproduction. The director's strategic preference for which phase is most important is a function of his personal style.

Some directors prepare films as fully as possible in advance. They know exactly what they want: "It's all in their heads." They put it down on paper and have a completely detailed shooting script before the first shot is made. In this case, the conceptualization of the film occurs completely in the preproduction phase. Shooting and editing become a matter of carrying out predetermined instructions in order to construct something that faithfully represents what has already been imagined. Directors who use this approach in effect make all creative choices in preproduction and achieve a maximum amount of closure before shooting begins.

Alfred Hitchcock is a director who puts maximum emphasis on preproduction. He makes and fixes all his decisions in advance. In preproduction he works out a full shooting script and editing plan, leaving no opportunity for later changes as the result of creative collaboration with actors or editor. Often he is not even present during production. For Hitchcock, the exciting part of film making is in the planning. Hitchcock has said: "When I've gone through the script and created the picture on paper, for me the creative job is done, and the rest is just a bore."^{*}

Other directors prefer to leave conceptualization open at least through the production phase. For them a crucial aspect of the creative process occurs in improvising and collaborating with actors and/or technicians to evolve the film—perhaps a collaboration which they repeat with some of the same people from film to film. For some directors the making of a film is a search. They do not know exactly what they will do, but in production they find it.

Ingmar Bergman also spends time on his scripts which he writes himself, and in planning his films. However, these efforts are simply the technical basis for the creative process that occurs in production as he works with the actors, and where he is always willing to make script and shooting changes. Bergman wants to capture the fresh, creative urge that occurs in acting of the highest caliber, which is characterized by a spontaneity that cannot be practiced in advance. Bergman once said about his search for the creative urge: "I believe it is precisely this which keeps me in films, holds me fascinated by the medium. The development and retention of a sudden burst of life..."[†]

The range of a director's choice in the postproduction phase depends on his "heaviness" or power. The index which most defines the director's authority is the profitability of his last film. If it was a blockbuster he will have "final cut" authority on his next film. That is to say, no one will have the right to change his final edited version. If he does not have final cut authority, he probably will have the right to "pre-view cut" but the distributing organization will retain the right to make subsequent changes.

But only if the director has final cut power, as Arthur Penn does, can the finished film be the result of one man's vision. In such a case everyone has to defer to his creative conceptualization, which is one of the norms of the industry. Many people are anxious to work with directors who have this heavy-weight authority, for with it go power, respect, and charisma. Less meddling and much less compromise occur on such a film.

Directors who are able to defer final choices until the postproduction editing phase can do so by having a very high shooting ratio (the number of feet of film exposed during the production relative to the actual length of the final film); and a very high coverage (the number of different ways in which a particular film is shot). They may take many different versions of a scene without reaching a final conclusion about the way in which they want the audience to experience it.

Arthur Penn's approach to film making is much closer to that of Bergman than to Hitchcock. In his judgment it is critical for the acting process to be one of immediacy and freshness, spontaneity and authenticity. His objective is to create an authentic happening which, in being photographed, will generate the film material. He wants to create this in as many forms as possible; to photograph it in as many ways as possible, leaving the choice of what will appear in the final film until the editing phase. This is both an exciting and taxing way to work, and the importance of his leadership style lies in the way he brings it about.

^{*}Francis Truffaut, *Hitchcock* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1967).

[†]Stig Bjorkman et al., *Bergman on Bergman* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1974).



Gene Hackman, left, and Arthur Penn set up a scene in the Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum for *Night Moves*.

time and costs with great precision. The tight schedule produced a continual sense of pressure, but people also derived a sense of satisfaction in meeting the schedule effectively day by day.

3

The need for approval and appreciation—Arthur Penn's sensitivity to, and responsiveness in working with, actors is unusual. Actors were pleased to know that he valued and appreciated both their technical and their personal abilities. His genuine yet discriminating approval and encouragement freed actors from anxiety about his acceptance of their work and released psychological energy which enabled them to go on performing as well or better, even when they were tired. Penn's ability to express his appreciation articulately and nonverbally was a key factor in creating an encouraging climate for the actors.

The ability to provide clear, realistic, positive feedback is unusual. In the business world, managers finding this difficult often tend to emphasize the negative. One manager we know said to a top subordinate at performance appraisal time, "I've given you an A on everything. You know what's good so let's talk about the bad," and then proceeded to do so for an hour. The absence of managerial approval can have several causes. Many managers are embarrassed at either giving or receiving praise. Some also find it hard to describe exactly what it is about a piece of work or a person that they value. In U.S. society there is also a semiconscious fear that the giving and receiving of verbal approval between men is somehow effeminate—much better to do it with a slap on the back.

Finally, there is the matter of organizational culture. In the film and theater world, people tend to express feelings more openly and spontaneously than elsewhere; that is their main task, and they have unusual skill in doing so. But the style that is usual in the acting world can sound effusive and insincere in a more austere technical or scientific setting. However, if expression of approval is to be an effective means of motivation, each manager has to find a language in which to phrase it; a language that sounds natural both to the organization and to him or her personally.

4

Long-term career self-interest—In the case of this film unit, Penn's reputation and past successes undoubtedly attracted people who hoped to learn and develop while working with him. They hoped to

enhance their own professional reputation through both the high quality of work they expected to accomplish under his direction and their association with a film they hoped would be a commercial success.

Similarly, people who are looking for career growth and financial rewards in business organizations tend to be keenly aware of the effects of present performance on future assignments. Business people are likely to value tasks that contribute to their future development above tasks that offer only a repetition of past experience or a technical detour away from their main career. In order to create maximal fit between personal aspirations and task needs, managers must find time to ask people about their career plans and to listen to what they have to say about them.

Some managers are reluctant to do this because they fear that conversations about career goals will raise unrealistic hopes in their subordinates, or that during the conversation they will commit themselves to promises they cannot fulfill. But most subordinates are realistic enough to know that it is impossible to satisfy all their needs even most of the time.

Instead, they are likely to be motivated almost as much by the knowledge that their manager is making an effort to understand and take account of their interests, as they are by any actual opportunities for growth that managers offer them.

Stimulating creativity

There is another aspect of motivation so important that we want to pay separate attention to it. Because of Penn's approach to film making, and his emphasis on the acting moment, his working relationships with actors were of crucial importance. He needed them to behave in ways that were spontaneous, authentic, original, and imaginative; to take risks by trying things they perhaps had never tried before; to be open to his suggestions and ideas; and to develop new ideas of their own and work with them. He was constantly open to the moment, not only abandoning his own preconceived ideas about how a line or scene should be played, but also actively helping actors shed their own preconceptions as well.

Susan Clark, the actress, commented: "Arthur maintains a two-way avenue of communication which must be kept open for suggestions and changes; the

relationship is vital." Gene Hackman said: "Not only did he set everything up beautifully but he can think on his feet. He wings it as well as he plans it and maybe even a little better. That's his power. That's what's fresh in the film. Any moment, you may catch an idea. When an idea is new and infused with that thought energy, it tends to spark alive and all sorts of things can happen."

Penn's encouragement and enthusiasm both elicited and rewarded the actor's performances as well as their trust in him. One particular technique contributed to this good working relationship. If Penn was dissatisfied, he would never give blatant negative feedback. Instead, making very small adjustments, he would keep asking his actors for something more: "This time maybe you could take a little more time" or "Let the hand go a little earlier." By encouraging his actors to adopt a different tone or attitude in their behavior rather than criticizing the whole performance and person, Penn avoided damaging the actor's sense of confidence and competence.

Another thing Penn did to avoid negative feedback was to refrain from interrupting a take once he had started it. His patience deliberately avoided the implication, "It's so bad that I don't want to see any more of it." The fact that even their unsuccessful efforts received respect was an important condition for risk taking in creative work.

By contrast, Penn was directive and relatively distant with the technical crews, from whom he demanded little spontaneous creativity. Because he needed to spend so much time with his actors, Penn collaborated little with the technical people themselves, leaving the responsibility for their technical effectiveness to the directors of photography, sound, and art work.

Penn's style of work—filming many versions of the same scene—made the technical workload particularly heavy. Sometimes the sheer pressure of work led the crews to feel that technical quality was being sacrificed. This mattered to them because their reputation depended on the opinion of studio heads who looked at the day-by-day screenings. Not all of the technical personnel understood Penn's way of working. People who had mostly worked on films where planning and closure occurred in preproduction assumed at first that his openness to improvisation denoted uncertainty, that "he didn't know beforehand what he wanted to do," and that he "wasn't

sure." When crew members did come to understand his style, they realized that the final choice about what the film was to contain would come in the postproduction phase, and felt excluded from the creative process.

Because of his priorities, Penn—consciously or unconsciously—varied the way in which he related to people. While he took time for actors to develop the spontaneous ideas and behavior which he needed, he also handled the stresses of time schedule and budget in a way which ensured that the production phase was completed on time.

Leadership style

In the ruled insert on page 64 we describe major differences between the work styles of directors such as Alfred Hitchcock, Ingmar Bergman, and Arthur Penn. All three men produce fine films, but each has a different approach to the development of ideas and to the stage at which decisions are made and closure is reached.

Any temporary system has a timespan within which it must both generate the idea or design of its product, and then carry this through to a finished form. During this process there will be periods when the emphasis is on the production of ideas and alternatives, on improvisation, exploration, and experimentation. And there will be periods when ideas must be evaluated, decisions made, and movement accelerated toward closure of some kind.

Given the degree of precision and detailed planning that most scientific and engineering endeavors require, it seems unlikely that the spectrum of possible managerial styles would be as broad as the spectrum from Hitchcock to Penn, but some variation will undoubtedly exist.

A key element to a project's success will, therefore, be the manager's ability to distinguish between the "idea-generating" and "decision-making" periods as they occur and alternate in his organization; to determine how much overlap he wishes to encourage between them; and to find ways of relating to subordinates according to their engagement in either of these phases. The manager needs to orchestrate the two appropriately. For while being authoritarian when ideas are needed certainly kills creativity, being appreciative and acceptant when a major decision is needed can kill the whole project, or prevent it moving to a next vital stage on time.

It is our impression that most managers are trained to handle the management of the implementation phase better than the management of the "generative" phase. We have described how Penn worked to create a climate of acceptance and encouragement that freed creativity by reducing actors' anxiety about their work. Management of anxiety is an important part of a manager's role. He needs both to understand its negative effects and to avoid behavior which is likely to arouse it, as well as protect subordinates from external stresses which are likely to cause it.

It is possible for managers in business and industry to follow Penn's example, and many do so intuitively. But it is rarer for a manager to consider this process consciously, or to try to become aware of the different ways in which he needs to relate to different people, or to the same people at different times. The intensity of the director-actor relationship will not necessarily occur or be appropriate in all temporary systems. In some scientific or manufacturing environments, for instance, the same intensity might seem excessive. But there are equivalent behaviors in all organizations and cultures that communicate a basic acceptance of people and their ideas, and encourage them to produce more good ones.

All of this goes further to explain why a director's or manager's own personal behavior is a very important source of motivation in a temporary system. He or she can show personal appreciation and approval, or he can show neglect, apathy, or disapproval. He can motivate through personal attention and social contact. He can demotivate by separating himself from certain members of the organization—which may happen inevitably even though he would want it otherwise. He can increase or decrease the amount of creative participation that he invites from different people, and vary the intensity of his working relationship with them. All these are subtle, often nonverbal, interpersonal cues.

At the same time it is impossible for any manager to interact closely with a large group of people for a long period of time. In the film unit, the technical crew felt undervalued because the director's main attention was on the actors. There may be such groups in any temporary organization. One way to avoid such a problem is for the manager to identify those people who, for some reason, he will pay less attention to, and plan a complementary role for a subordinate who can provide the necessary recognition, appreciation, or encouragement.

Another approach a manager can use is to hire a subordinate whose personal style complements rather than coincides with his or her own. This goes against the grain of most people's natural tendency to hire others with the same characteristics and values as their own, but it does eliminate the strain of denying one's own limitations and attempting to play a "supermanager" role.

Stress and conflict

How did people cope with the stresses caused by tight time and budget pressures, estrangement from familiar people and surroundings, and uncertainty about how good the film would be?

One important element in reducing stress was the norm of helpful collaboration that prevailed. This took the form of sensitivity to other people's feelings, and a willingness to provide interpersonal support. Usually this consisted of a symbolic gesture of some kind that could vary from a sympathetic look or a pat on the back, to doing an errand for someone, listening to a person's worries, or—in the case of an actress—cooking a Thanksgiving dinner for a group of people on location. Nurturant gestures of this kind were protective and reassuring. They gave people a sense that, to some small extent, others were willing to take care of them in a way that normally occurs more in personal life than at work. Such gestures were doubly important when location shooting separated people from the personal relationships that were their usual source of caring and concern.

Symbolic support of this kind can also have considerable importance between a manager and a group of subordinates, as well as between individuals. For example, in one high-technology company, an overburdened project team was told that the company president had called a meeting at a nearby hotel late on Friday afternoon, which everyone had to attend. They arrived, tired and dispirited, expecting a heavy chewing out over time-schedule delays. Instead, they found themselves at a surprise cocktail party, hearing the president say: "There's still a long way to go, but I want you to know we appreciate your efforts so far." Then he sent everyone home.

Penn dealt with stresses caused by interruption through unusually careful protection of the work areas. Gene Hackman explained the reason: "There's a funny kind of family atmosphere on a film that is generally created by the director. Many times that

family balloon can be punctured quite readily by an outside influence. If you are working on a scene and you see out of the corner of your eye a foreign object, someone standing by the camera, I for one, get a little *tight*."

In the business and industrial world, geographic boundaries are less easily monitored, but there are other ways of protecting people's concentration on the task. For example, many disturbances tend to be caused by organizational or personal administrative problems. In some cases it may be worth appointing a support person who can buffer disturbances from the outside, and can service the team—for instance, someone who will follow up on a lost paycheck, an undelivered desk, a purchasing snarl-up, or a leaking roof above a drawing board.

It may even be worth having someone take care of minor personal needs too, such as making dental or hairdresser's appointments, cashing checks, or finding out whether a repaired car is ready for pickup. There is a common assumption that "personal" administrative problems should be taken care of by the individual, but all too often this can only be done during working hours. In the film unit the production secretaries provided such personal services. Penn worked under the notion that "anything which disturbs is a disturbance," and did not try to categorize distractions as "personal" or "official."

Another common source of stress in temporary groups is the conflict that occurs between people who must work closely together. One of the main thrusts of current organizational development work is the encouragement of conflict resolution by means of confrontation. However, time in a film unit—a marginal cost of \$25,000 per day for *Night Moves*—is too valuable to spend on resolving difficulties in working relationships which will soon come to an end. Here a major professional convention of the film business protected the work. This unwritten law requires that no matter how tense, dissatisfied, or upset actors and director may be, they keep their complaints and conflicts off the set and out of formal working hours. In nonworking hours people dealt with stress in various ways. Some withdrew—to books, music, alcohol, or drugs. Some became more than usually gregarious.

One main source of potential stress and tension in every temporary—and permanent—system, is rarely talked about. It is the personal behavior of the manager. For example, some managers look only for problems and faults in whatever their colleagues

and subordinates tell them. As a result, subordinates may tend actively to avoid such a manager in order to protect themselves from the angry feelings which such critical behavior arouses.

Managers can do even very small things that contribute to or alleviate stress if they continually repeat them. For instance, if a team is somewhat slow in ending a coffee break, the director or manager can adopt an authoritarian tone of voice and yell his orders to "get back to work." Or he can stand up, point silently to his watch, and rely on his subordinates' sense of professionalism to motivate them to get moving. In the latter case, there is less chance that employees will experience the message as a reproach, and so less chance that the level of confidence and trust which they have in their manager will be reduced.

Because he was so acutely aware of the schedule, Penn was a hard taskmaster, asking people to work intensely for long hours. Gene Hackman described the way in which Penn could turn the time pressure he was under into increased work momentum for the actors: "He is a terrific manager. He keeps it rolling. There is a little part of his brain that is counting dollars. But when he tells you to keep it rolling, he tells you, 'good for your energy, let's keep it moving.'"

Most temporary systems share the stresses of the film unit: uncertainty of outcome, intense time and budget pressures, long hours of work, and more than usual interdependence between fellow workers. In looking for ways to think about this aspect of their responsibilities, many managers, particularly scientists and engineers, naturally look to physical models of stress. As a result they make the assumption that stress in human beings is akin to stress in materials; that everything will be fine as long as a certain limit of elasticity is not passed. But, unfortunately, stress in people is cumulative. The only way for a manager to be aware of how much and what kind of stress his people are experiencing is to monitor it—by asking them and listening to what they tell him.

The final stress that film and theater people manage well is the business of "letting go." The director or producer usually arranges some event that marks closure—such as a cast party. And in fact many managers do the same, using a party or dinner as an opportunity to make a final expression of appreciation, to plan a moment for their subordinates to celebrate and take pride in their achievements before moving on. People who manage this kind of ritual

smoothly are at an advantage, but it does not come naturally to everyone. In this case the manager needs to find someone who will help or even do this for him; one's own boss is the first source of help. The process also has some importance to the manager of the project to which people are next assigned. For if management has provided some appropriate ending that gives subordinates a sense of closure on their last project, people will feel psychologically freer to commit themselves to the next task.

Rewards of temporary systems

A friend in the film world summed up the challenge of working in temporary systems for us: "Really the thing about temporary systems is that you have to be more interpersonally competent. People have to be able to accept bull and come back the next day and get on with the work just the same; live through crisis and stress and provide support for each other to get through it; and still keep the creative ideas coming, through it all."

In businesses—such as the film industry and the theater—where high levels of interpersonal sensitivity and expressiveness are necessary to complete the system's task most people are already interpersonally competent. They are trained to be. But in organizations where the task depends on a process of scientific rationality, interpersonal competence is not immediately and self-evidently necessary, and tends not to be highly valued. The skills needed to manage or be a member of a temporary system will not be in great supply, and may even be regarded as "counterculture."

The cultivation of higher levels of interpersonal skill in temporary systems, which do not have an intrinsic high value for them, is an area in which more research and experimentation is urgently needed. We have two reasons for saying this. One is, of course, related to the elimination of problems that prevent tasks being accomplished successfully. The other is related to the quality of human experience that can occur in a temporary organization.

Part of the excitement in making a film comes from the product. The creation of a film involves more drama and more opportunity for fantasy, for per-

sonal expressiveness and emotionality, than does the manufacture of, say, a refrigerator or a computer program. But some of the excitement comes from the organizational form itself. Temporary systems provide opportunities for intensity in work, and for closeness and commitment in working relationships which many though not all of us enjoy and value highly for limited periods of time. Because of these time and membership limits and the mutual commitment to a clear common goal, temporary systems have the potential for being more exciting places to work than permanent ones.

People who have participated in such systems often have a sense of having experienced their work life more fully and excitingly than in other settings. Not all the experience is necessarily good. Obviously it includes stress, frustration, and sometimes isolation. But because the goal is circumscribed and time-limited, it becomes possible for people to put out a greater effort to achieve it than is possible on a continuing basis. When the exertion of such effort is accomplished by achievement of the goal, by fruitful collaborative relationships with others, and by the appreciation of those who led the work, most people experience an important and positive sense of satisfaction.

Similarities exist between the management of a film project and the management of other temporary work systems, such as technical or scientific projects, consulting teams, task forces, and other short-term task groups. Most temporary projects go through an analogous series of phases, including planning and recruiting, implementing and leading, and follow up and clean up. By examining one film director's successful approach to managing creativity, insights applicable to the business world are gained regarding the stimulation of creativity, working relationships, and leadership styles. Deta