

Book Review - Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices

Abhishek Kumar Preetam*, Richa Purohit**

Abstract

"Half a century ago, management was largely misunderstood as a concept and virtually unrecognized as a profession. In William H. Whyte's 1956 classic, The Organization Man, the word "management" made its infrequent appearances mostly as an adjective ("the average management man," "management policy") or as a collective noun synonymous with "bosses" ("the management said"). The word almost never conveyed the sense of a profession or a body of knowledge. That it does so today is due largely to Peter Drucker. (Classic Drucker Essential Wisdom of Peter Drucker from the pages of Harvard Business Review, A Harvard Business Review Book, Copyright 2006 Harvard Business School Publishing Corporation).

It is no overstatement that Peter F. Drucker can be coined the father of modern management as we know it. Our knowledge of management and how it should be applied is largely drawn from the vast body of work of Peter Drucker. *The Management by Objective (The Practice of Management Peter F. Drucker Copyright 1955, Peter F. Drucker)* essentially guides any beginner in management and is the most effective concept that drives global management principles and practices. This is carried through numerous books and articles, prominently in Harvard Business Review and others, and through works like *'Managing the Public Service Institutions'* and *'Management Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices'*. Here, we would critically analyze one such work, which is his book *"Management Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices"*.

This review draws upon the comparative analysis, as well as mini case studies (e.g., UPS leadership practices research paper review). It also includes Indian management research to critically highlight Drucker's bias toward big-business structures, top-down managerialism, and Western-centric perspectives. It maps Drucker's themes of tasks, responsibilities, and institutional management to current distributed team roles, shared

accountability, and outcome-driven IT delivery. This book review argues for more inclusive, stakeholder-centered models with Information Technology as the backbone of modern business enterprise.

Keywords: Drucker, IT Project Management, Agile, DevOps, Knowledge Worker, Indian Management

Author and Book Information

Title: Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices

Author: Peter F. Drucker

Publisher: Harper & Row

Year of Publication: 1974 (Original English Edition)

ISBN: 9780060110911 (1974 edition)

Pages: 946 pages

About: Peter F. Drucker (1909–2005) was an Austrian-born American management consultant, educator, and author, widely regarded as the father of modern management. His work *'Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices'* was first published in 1974 (original English edition) by Harper & Row. This extensive volume offers a comprehensive view of management as both practice and discipline, with applications spanning business, government, and non-profit sectors. The book is structured to cover the manager's role, the tasks of management, and the responsibilities towards people, institutions, and society.

* Research Scholar, Sri Balaji University, Pune, Maharashtra, India.

** Associate Professor, School of Computer Studies, SBUP, Maharashtra, India.
Email: sr.preet@gmail.com, richa.purohit@sbup.edu.in

Introduction

Over fifty years ago, Drucker's work professionalized "management" (Whyte, 1956), inspiring frameworks like Management by Objectives that shaped managerial discourse across corporate and knowledge-based sectors. This book richly supplemented the earlier body of work of Peter Drucker and created yet another milestone which would shape the ongoing evolution and enrichment of management practices and principles. This book is particularly valuable for its applied approach in managing organization including the stress on new-age knowledge enterprise. The current Information Technology based organization, including Information Technology Services (ITS) as well as Information Technology enabled Services (ITeS) fits entirely in the characteristic of both a service organization as well as a knowledge-based organization (Preetam & Jain, 2021). The primary reason why this book review describes the contents of this book is, even if one merely goes through the contents of the book, it will show such a refined and measured outlook towards management for an enterprise.

This book is correct and justifiably touches upon the three sub-avenues of management, which are tasks, responsibilities and practices to take ahead the management principles, practices and management science. It is a gold mine for management consultants, and it is equally applied for small, medium and large enterprises. We have no doubt to proclaim that this is the finest collection of applied knowledge, in terms of management. We see around us a steep decline in big organization, while at the same time the bigger organizations are getting enormous to the point of creating a monopoly. Also, there is such a wide mushrooming of small organizations. This book can help organizations of all sizes to understand how to grow, assess what has gone wrong, what may go wrong and how to do right size, sustain and evolve.

Summary

The book has 61 chapters across the three core themes of Tasks, Responsibilities and Practices. The Preface and the write-up '*The alternative to Tyranny*' sets-up management for the context of this book. Then there is the Introduction and first section '*FROM MANAGEMENT BOOM TO MANAGEMENT PERFORMANCE*' which

has three chapters (Chapter 1 to 3) *The Emergence of Management, The Management Boom and Its Lessons and The New Challenges*. Part One of the book deals with the first theme of '*THE TASKS*' and covers chapters 4 to 28 which are further categorized as chapter 4 '*The Dimensions of Management*', chapter 5 to 10 are under '*Business Performance*', chapter 11 to 14 are under '*Performance in the Service Institution*', chapter 15 to 23 are under '*Productive Work and Achieving Worker*', and chapter 24 to 28 are under '*Social Impacts and Social Responsibilities*'.

In part two, the book covers '*THE MANAGER*', chapter 29 '*Why Managers?*' covers '*Work, Jobs, Skills, and Organization*'. Chapters 30 to 36 are under '*The Manager's Work and Jobs*', chapter 37 to 40 are '*Managerial Skills*', and chapter 41 to 48 are under '*Managerial Organizations*'.

In part three, the book covers '*TOP MANAGEMENT*'. The section '*Tasks, Organization, Strategies*' starts with chapter 49 '*Georg Siemens and the Deutsche Bank*'. Then it has section '*Top-Management Tasks and Organization*' covering chapter 50 to 52. Chapter 53 to 61 are under '*Strategies and Structures*'. The book ends with '*Conclusion: The Legitimacy of Management*'.

This book throws a good light on the intra organization relationships as well as inter organizations, impact on society, multi-cultural aspects while keeping the human caliber at the core of it, always (Preetam & Jain, 2021). It is true, in our opinion, that this book does carry the white men's burden, and there is an inherent bias because the author (Peter Drucker) comes from big-business American capitalist eco-system and has not been exposed, or accounted for the Indian or Chinese success story, and the Information Technology based enterprises, the shortcomings of which are strewn all across. Nevertheless, we have been very fortunate to go through this book and analyze it because it has been an invaluable addition to our limited knowledge base, and we would recommend revisiting this book to guide and navigate through one's corporate career. We would recommend this to all readers and practitioners of management.

The Tasks of Management

The author identifies the primary tasks of management as setting objectives, organizing work, motivating and

communicating, measuring performance, and developing people. They emphasize that management is both a discipline and a practice, rooted in balancing efficiency with human development.

The Responsibilities of Management

The author describes the manager's role in safeguarding societal interests, fostering ethical conduct, and ensuring that organizations contribute positively to the community. This is in addition to the profit-making enterprise goals. This links corporate legitimacy to its ability to serve the public good.

The Practices of Management

The book's final section addresses the operational side, decision-making, strategic planning, and innovation. The author distinguishes between efficiency ("doing things right") and effectiveness ("doing the right things"), advocating for a focus on results rather than processes. Our critique is more on the processes as we are aligned to the information technology management.

Critical Evaluation

Thematic Analysis

Enduring Relevance

Why did we choose to criticize this book, which is a part of the wider body of work of Peter Drucker? Well, to begin with, we are a huge admirer of his work and try to learn through it. It starts as part of our formal education, when we were introduced to 'Management by Objective' which stuck with us, as it does with almost all management students and practitioners. We had experiences in our professional career, and these experiences and interactions with other professionals (person/s and organization/s) further fan our innovative and critical observation of management practices and principles through literary work, applied work and as is being practiced. We have been fortunate to have interacted with professionals from this field of work (which is Information Technology) across geography, India & Singapore (primarily) but also Europe, US, and other Asian countries. We realized that

there is a need to critically examine the management principles because we observed very clear gaps in terms of their origin, which is from traditional mechanical setup to Informational Technology setup, and here we are differentiating Information Technology from Computer just as a machine.

Decision-Making and Data

Our initial observations related to 'Management by Objective', and because Information Technology deals so much with intangibles, that it is imperative to define tangibles to bring in standardization and applicability of management principles & practices. It is one thing to understand the literary work and analyze and interpret it and apply it to drive an Information Technology based enterprise, but it is critical this enables management in Information Technology to be outcome oriented, so Information Technology would need 'Management by Outcome', and that too, 'Incremental & Tangible Management by Outcome (IT MBO)'.

Knowledge Work and the Digital Enterprise

New age enterprises are knowledge enterprises that are ever evolving. Consider a widely discussed case of Netflix. Netflix started as a video streaming platform as an alternative to watching entertainment content over internet. They captured the market and created a new business enterprise with streaming services. With the advent of Artificial Intelligence, they implemented the new technology to bring a transformative paradigm shift to their core business model. Now, they are an AI-enabled recommendation platform that has space for both new ages as well as traditional entertainment content. And they are now the leader in being the best recommendation engine-based platform. Contrast this to the example of Kodak who was the market leader in creating films and film roll based camera. With the advent of technology, first with digital cameras where Sony took the lead and then with handheld mobile phones replacing the popular need of handheld cameras, Apple and Samsung reimagining this and taking the lead so much so that market existence became an existential quest for Kodak. The new age enterprise is a knowledge enterprise, and the wisdom of knowledge worked dictates the evolution of knowledge enterprise. If the knowledge is not tapped into, that leads to fatal impact on business.

We are not trying to postulate on the management principles, new-age enterprise management is also aligned with the postulations, effectiveness and implementation of Drucker's work, including this one. But the book review came across certain points of view, expression and basic reasoning which were tested for implementation on the management practices, specifically in Information Technology domain. The review intends to bring the seminal work in-tune with modern times.

Analyzing Applicability

Institution vs. Stakeholder Reality

As the management for new-age enterprises evolves (consider enterprises like OpenAI, Perplexity, etc.), management expressed both as the management of projects (Information Technology) and management of organization (Information Technology enterprises). The institutions and the stakeholders take each other's avatar. The growth of an algorithm is the work of an enterprise, but the ideation may come from the stakeholder's which will guide the algorithm.

Bias Toward Hierarchy and "The Manager"

Today, when IT has allowed new enterprises to grow (start-ups), AI fast-tracks the path to inception and redefines the working of the established enterprises, it would make sense for the new age business to aid their management principles for sustenance and evolution. The author (Drucker) starts by being an apologist for big business. There are a distinction and an alignment to be cautious. We see the start-up culture that on the face appears to challenge the traditional hegemony of the big business. The management principles, practices and labor are all managed in an innovative way that challenges the traditional notion, and in that sense, traditional postulations, such as those of Drucker. But a closer look at the funding structure of these start-ups reveals that the investment firms are big business enterprise and then later the appropriation of these start-ups either through mergers, acquisition, part-stakes, are also carried out in a way that they become a part of our big-business in themselves.

Performance vs. Learning

Another aspect is Drucker's "not knowing but doing" which undervalues iterative evidence-based learning. Agile retrospectives, DevOps pipelines, and data-informed project governance rely on knowing-doing feedback loops. There needs to be a distinction. A set of intangibles that guided individuals working for a varied set of enterprises (where enterprise is defined as any work of labor with action and reaction, input and output, of product, service or any other verifiable outcome), which can be termed as management practices (Preetam & Jain, 2021). It was a historical phenomenon which is being built upon and enriched, through these phases and nomenclatures. This differentiated against the popularization & subsequent commercialization (commoditization, too) by coining the term 'management' to sell it as a commodity, as well as to use it as a source of political and cultural supremacy.

Empirical Illustrations

UPS Case (BJMR, Vol. I (1))

UPS's century-long success reflects Drucker's managerial operations but extends them. Employees own 59% of equity, grassroots leadership evolves from delivery staff, and the culture embeds feedback via Lewin-style change cycles (unfreeze-change-refreeze). These practices defy Drucker's "managerial hero" and "institution-first" bias. As per UPS paper review, it also ties ownership to performance, this is aligned with incremental outcomes principle.

Indian IT/DevOps Context

Indian Agile and DevOps teams distribute responsibility for code quality, deployment, and monitoring. Roles like Scrum Master, Product Owner, or Site Reliability Engineer reflect Drucker's five operations but decentralize them. CSF studies in India, such as Serrador and Pinto (2015) and empirical delphi findings, confirm this shift. These practices exemplify modernizing Drucker's model. We must recognize the need to define the 'developed' country, particularly from management perspective and not purely from a 'new world' economics.

Comparative Critique

Table 1: Comparative Critique Table

<i>Drucker Theme</i>	<i>Alignment</i>	<i>Conflict with IT Trends</i>
Task Delegation	Still relevant in Agile planning	“Managers” are not the sole task owners, managers are at multiple level, less supervisory and more knowledge equal, Scrum teams self-organize.
Responsibility	Education of workers	Every stakeholder co-manages deliverables, not only managers, which is the concept of weighted equal.
Institutional Focus	Defines businesses & structures	IT firms blur boundaries, startups, remote teams, platform ecosystems, global and regional releases as well as concepts of Software as a Service, Infrastructure as a Service, Platform as a Services, Resourcing as a Service.
Managerial Authority	Clear hierarchies	Flattened, adaptive leadership models are dominant in IT environments, not uncommon to have MDs, VPs, along-with Board, as well as Consultants and Delivery Engineers to take authority based on the deliverables and decisions mapped to them.
Measurement & Objectives	Objectives central (MBO)	Integrated SLAs/KPIs now map roles and workflow, not just management directives. The outcomes evolve just as the business and end-customer needs.

Recommendation

In our recommendation, this book should be an essential reading for managers seeking to understand the philosophical and structural foundations of their craft. Along with other works of Peter Drucker, specially, Management by Objective. However, practitioners who belong to IT project management should approach it as a historical anchor rather than a complete operational guide. In new age institutions, all managerial jobs are transitory, that is professionals move from one organization to another, one project to another, one role to another and one job specification to another. This is as much a requirement of knowledge-based industry as is the nature of a knowledge worker.

Implications for Practice

Leadership: New age enterprise has a different role for leadership. Considering the case of OpenAI, OpenAI started with one leader with an idea who assembled a core team and put out a pilot project. This pilot was based on historical work on machine learning and artificial intelligence but with the exceptional compute power of modern machines, they were able to create a product that would work for a mass consumer base. Initially, the investment firms were not super interested but after the traction they got, they invested and now it is one of the biggest conglomerates. Compare this leadership to, for

example, Grok AI, which is Twitter acquired by Tesla CEO and with the help of a core team, re-purposed into an AI first platform (or at-least the intention) similar to how Netflix transformed their business leveraging AI. This is a different way in which the leadership operated. And similarly compare the example of DeepSeek where it is believed with the aid of the Chinese government, they developed a competitive but much efficient product with a collective leadership and not a hero face or the Swiss government taking the public university route to create their AI platform. These are all examples of various approaches to leadership in establishing service institutions to serve business functions. The Leadership must have a clear focus now on the service it renders, business sustainability but also the knowledge or more specifically in this case, technology adoption not just in an incremental but in a transformative mode.

Project Design: In the new age enterprise, particularly Information Technology, the size is a function of finite market segment that the enterprise aims to cater, through action-oriented approach. The market segment with action-oriented approach would determine the size of the enterprise (to answer “*how big is big*”). For example, comparing OpenAI and DeepSeek, which one would be a big-business or both. Will it be in terms of the size or revenue or geography or usability or return on investment. It doesn’t comment directly about the size of the organization. Yes, the size of the organization would be affected by the success factor, as success would enable the organization to re-size.

Policy and Training: An IT organization providing application development services would naturally consider tapping application testing as a service market segment. It is imperative for the organization to hire specialist, upper-middle manager, to initiate testing as a service. If they make do with in-house resources, career specialization in application development with may or may not enough enthusiasm for application testing as a service, lacking specialization, vision and expertise. It is bound to boomerang, as this person would find it conflicting to sell testing, which is to find faults with application development, his / her core competency till date. If they must go to the client to discuss the merit of testing, they would always be bothered whether the client would come back and say, but you are doing development, why don't you do it right. And they may not have the right response, because they are not the specialists to argue on these lines and substantively convince the client of the need to avail testing as a service offering. So, there are legitimate avenues in IT industry where upper-middle management is hired from outside and given an end-to-end responsibility to achieve success, supplemented with right policy framework and training requirements.

Cultural Adaptation: Indian IT leadership requires cultural fluency, addressing legacy biases and embracing diversity in teams. The Indian market is a great learning curve to expand to wider geography because of the diversity and inherent learnings that are embedded in the system. Innovation must always germinate in an ecosystem of technological evolution. It is not merely whether the organization under study is performing research or driving the technological evolution, but it is imperative for the organization's management to adopt and align with the technological evolution of shape, size, efficiency or feature, etc. (Preetam & Jain, 2022).

Conclusion

Peter F. Drucker's *Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices* is a cornerstone of management theory. It offers enduring guidance on leadership, organizational purpose, and societal responsibility. We argue that some of these operational details have aged, but the core principles remain valuable. When we reinterpreted it through the lens of digital transformation and knowledge work, we would argue that for IT project managers, Drucker

provides the "why" of management; while the modern frameworks supply the "how."

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to acknowledge all individuals and sources that indirectly supported the completion of this book review.

Financial Support and Sponsorship

The authors conducted this work independently without external financial support.

Conflicts of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest.

AI Disclosure

The authors confirm that no AI-based tools were utilized in conducting this research or writing the manuscript. All content is original and reflects the authors' own work.

References

- Bapat, O. J. (2023). How UPS has lasted for more than a century: An analysis of its style of leadership and working [Case]. *The Balajian Journal of Management Research*, 1(1), 65–71.
- Denning, S. (2018). *The age of agile: How smart companies are transforming the way work gets done*. AMACOM.
- Drucker, P. F. (1973). *Management: Tasks, responsibilities, practices*. Harper & Row.
- Highsmith, J. (2013). *Adaptive leadership in the agile enterprise*. Addison-Wesley.
- Iriarte, C., & Bayona, S. (2020). IT projects success factors: A literature review. *International Journal of Information Systems and Project Management*, 8(2), 49–78.
- Preetam, A. K., & Jain, R. K. (2021). Evolution of management in the information technology domain to incremental and tangible outcome-based mode: Accelerated by the positive influence of COVID-19. *International Journal of Modern Agriculture*, 10(2).

- Preetam, A. K., & Jain, R. K. (2022). Enabling the management evolution in the information technology domain: Analysing the incremental and tangible management by outcome (IT MBO). *International Journal of Recent Research in Commerce Economics and Management*, 9(2), 37–51.
- Rigby, D. K., Sutherland, J., & Takeuchi, H. (2016). Embracing agile. *Harvard Business Review*, 94(5), 40–50.
- Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (4th ed.). Jossey-Bass.
- Serrador, P., & Pinto, J. K. (2015). Does agile work? A quantitative analysis of project success. *International Journal of Project Management*, 33(5), 1040–1051.