

Summary of My Article: “The Scapegoat in Organizations”

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Function of the scapegoat

The biblical scapegoat was an animal sacrifice to God to atone for the sins of the group and its people. Thereby, individual guilt is relieved and the people can continue to function without feeling a necessity for fundamental change. Metaphorically, a human substitutes for a goat.

Dysfunctional families and groups may not feel a need to change if sufficient resources are available and outside pressure on the status quo is minimal. Anxiety results when some sort of conflict begs to be resolved and taxes the organization's ability to make rational decisions. Then, a person is selected to absorb the unpleasant psychic energy. He or she is called a scapegoat or, in a family, the identified patient.

Purpose of the scapegoat in organizations.

The family unites to protect the parents and organization members unite to protect the “leader.” Lacking “leadership, purpose, and success,” the group will sacrifice one of their own, rather than the person at the top. By redirecting the focus of the blame away from the cause toward a specific individual drains anxiety and allows the group to continue functioning without focusing on basic problems.

The quest for a solution

The scapegoat alone may be insufficient to distract from the real problems at hand. Other attempts at solutions may be to bring in an “expert” to “solve” the problems or to adopt a fad or fashionable method to be a salvation going forward.

People and groups are enmeshed in their ways and beyond the scapegoat look for canned methods to deal with problems. A motivational speaker may be brought in to inspire trustees and troops. In the final analysis, dysfunctional groups will try and perpetuate themselves by using various means of draining off anxiety.

A longer (~1000 words), more detailed article was published in the October 2007 (vol. 7, no. 4) issue of *Leadership and Management in Engineering*. This is a publication of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE). The paper was printed in the “Forum” section so it cannot be found using a keyword or author search in academic databases that include the journal.

It can be found on Internet searches that link to the ASCE publications department. The society sells copies for \$30. Academic libraries that subscribe to the *Business Source* databases can download a full-text version in pdf format. Because the article is not searchable, connect to the issue and access pages 124-125.

Summary of My Article: “The Unappreciated Humanist: A Defense of F. W. Taylor and Scientific Management”

The legacies of F. W. Taylor

Because he studied, analyzed, and structured the work environment, Taylor was criticized by human relations theorists that came after him. He was demonized for directive supervision, impersonal and mechanized work, plus standardization and procedures arising out of time and motion studies. The methods are correctly stated but the interpretations are unfair. *His results were humane.*

To gain a clearer understanding of the man, his methods and motives, it is suggested that the reader take the time to read his short 1911 book, [*The Principles of Scientific Management*](#). Results and not presentation to the engineering and business community are a better judge of scientific management. Psychoanalysis has taught us that interpreters of another's work slant it to their own belief system (it is called countertransference).

Taylor's presentation of his ideas

Taylor's original articles were printed in *Mechanical Engineering*, the magazine of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers. He was writing before the time when politically correct editors would eliminate reference to pig iron workers as stupid, phlegmatic, and like oxen. He also had ideas on how money affected workers.

Psychology of the worker

He thought it unfair that he was criticized because pig iron workers wages were only increased by 60% when their productivity was increased 3.6 times. Besides feeling that progressive companies deserved a profit and that society as a whole benefitted, he believed too large a raise was detrimental. “Our experiments showed, in other words, it does not do for most men to get rich too fast.” A 30-100% pay increase was considered optimal.

Taylor learned that ball bearing inspectors did not want to reduce their hours from ten to eight. So, workdays were reduced in increments over months and periodic breaks were provided; while productivity increased and pay remained the same.

The world before F. W. Taylor

Industrial establishments had 20 or 30 trades and hundreds of employees who performed as they were taught by older tradespeople. Bosses realized they could not control everyone's work. Workers used a process called “soldering” to keep productivity down.

This article (~1900 words) appeared in the January 2007 (vol. 7, no. 1) issue of *Leadership and Management in Engineering*, also in the “Forum” section. Select the issue from the full-text database and access pages 3-5.

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