

# Book reviews

**RALPH H. KILMANN, *Social Systems Design: Normative Theory and the MAPS Design Technology*, North-Holland, Amsterdam, 1977, xv + 327 pages, Dfl. 65.00.**

On page two of this book we read that MAPS stands for "Multivariate Analysis, Participation, and Structure", a method which aims "to develop an interdisciplinary, normative technology to mobilize (or remobilize) resources to more effectively define and obtain Social Systems objectives".

According to the message on page 117 this method includes the following steps: (1) separating the list of task items into distinct clusters representing various task structures of the social system, (2) separating respondents to the MAPS questionnaire (i.e., the members directly involved within the boundaries of the design, in contrast to individuals who may have generated task items via environmental membership) into people clusters to confront the various task structures of the social system, and (3) assigning clusters of tasks to clusters of people (respondents) which results in possible subsystem designs for the organization.

It all boils down to matching people and tasks, a very difficult matter as many managers will have experienced.

To solve this allocation problem a number of task items, which fall within the scope of the general organizational objectives, are listed. Next, each person involved is asked to state his interest in any item on a seven point scale. In a similar way all persons express their like or dislike with any other person in the organization.

The task items are now grouped into clusters in such a way that there is a high correlation within a cluster and a comparatively low one between items in different clusters. In a similar fashion people clusters can be formed according to each person's interest in task items and their liking of other persons.

The result of this procedure is a matching of task clusters and people clusters, where all members of the same cluster are of a rather similar nature. This method works only if a homogenous group will con-

tribute more to organizational effectiveness than a heterogeneous group.

This book is difficult to read because the chapters have been written by different people who do not feel inhibited to repeat the same things many times over. They also stake out claims which do not seem to be justified in the light of the results obtained by this method, as given in chapter eight.

Nevertheless, the problems they tackle are certainly very difficult and it is hoped that this type of analysis will finally lead somewhere, e.g., a method to improve organizational designs or communication structures. If continued research along the lines of Professor Kilmann helps to contribute to these problems of synthesis then this book may be considered a success, but it is still too early to tell.

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**ROGER WILLIS, *An Analytical Approach to Physical Distribution Management*, Kogan Page, 120 Pentonville Road, London, 239 pages, ISBN 0 85038 072 3, £8.00.**

In the preface the author describes this work as a primer in the techniques required to handle the planning problems experienced in the transport and distribution industries. The book is aimed at distribution managers, existing and prospective, and sets out to provide both a contextual appraisal of the role that analytic techniques can play in physical distribution management (PDM) and a grounding in some of the models available.

The corporate context of PDM occupies the first section of the book, in which stress is rightly placed on the total cost concept and the need for the distribution manager to occupy a position in the company structure that allows him to balance the conflicting objectives of customer service and low costs. The author opts for the target of minimising costs for a stated level of service, although it is implicit that the service level should be subject to review in the light of more basic company objectives, e.g. maximising return on capital. There is an interesting chapter on the interaction between distribution and marketing, with the concept of product life-cycles affecting the service levels that are worth pursuing at different times, and further chapters are devoted to a discus-