

ELTON MAYO THE HAWTHORNE STUDIES

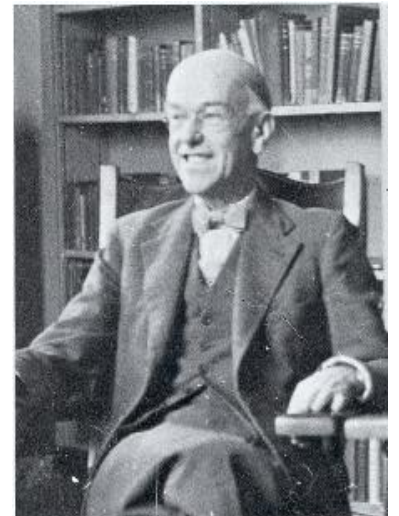
Studies carried out at the
Hawthorne Plant of the Western
Electric Company in Chicago
between 1927 and 1932

HUMAN RELATIONS SCHOOL

- Due to unrest caused by Taylor's scientific principles in the 20's and 30's work was carried out based in the 'human side' of workers – not focusing on money
- Elton Mayo was one of the main theorists involved.

Background on Mayo

- Born in Adelaide, South Australia in 1880
- Died in Surrey in 1949
- Worked in Australia, UK and the USA on various projects and lecturing



History of the Hawthorne Studies

- Background: Mayo wanted to find out what effect fatigue and monotony had on job productivity and how to control them through variables such as
 - Rest breaks
 - Work hours
 - Temperatures
 - Humidity

In the process....

- He found a principle of human motivation that would help to revolutionise the theory and practice of management

The experiment

- 6 women from an assembly line
- Segregated them from the rest of the factory
- Put them under the eye of a supervisor (a friendly observer)
- Made frequent changes to their working conditions
- Always discussed and explained the changes in advance

The changes

- Changed the hours in the working week and in the working day
- Increased and decreased the number of work breaks and the time of the lunch hour
- Occasionally he would return the women to their original, harder working conditions

The findings

- Under normal conditions with a 48 hour week, including Saturdays and no rest pauses:
- Team produced 2400 relays per week each

Findings during experiment

- They were put on piecework for 8 weeks
 - Output went up
- Rest pauses were introduced for 5 weeks
- Output went up

- Rest pauses were lengthened to 10 minutes
 - Output went up
- Six 5-min pauses were introduced and the girls complained that their work rhythm was broken
 - Output fell very slightly
- Return to 2 rest pauses the first with a hot meal supplied free of charge
 - Output went up

- Group were dismissed at 4.30 pm instead of 5.00 pm
 - Output went up
- They were dismissed at 4.00 pm
 - Output remained the same
- Finally all improvements were taken away and the team went back to the conditions at the beginning of the experiment
- Output was the highest ever recorded at 3000 relays per week per person

What happened during the experiment?

- The individuals became a team and the team gave wholehearted co-operation with the experiment
- They were happy in the knowledge that they were doing what they wanted to do
- They felt they were working under less pressure than before
- They were not pushed around or bossed by anyone
- Under these conditions they developed an increased sense of responsibility which came from within the group itself

Mayo's Conclusions

- Individual workers cannot be treated in isolation but must be seen as members of a group
- Monetary incentives and good working conditions are less important to the individual than the need to belong to a group
- Informal or unofficial groups formed at work have strong influence on behaviour
- Managers must be aware of these 'social needs' and cater for them to ensure that employees work with the organisation rather than against it