

Elton Mayo



Elton Mayo was born in Australia in 1880. He was not introduced to sociology until 1926 when Lawrence J. Henderson introduced him to Pareto's theory. At that time Mayo was already 46 years

old. He applied existing Sociological theories to other research and management studies being undertaken at the time. He did not always conduct the research himself but he would apply his theories to the research that other people did. He then published his conclusions successfully because Mayo was an excellent publicist of the studies, and his advocacy of the concepts of social man and social needs were so strongly associated with the studies.

Elton Mayo was the founder of the Human Relations Movement and of Industrial Sociology. He is probably most known for the research he carried out at the Hawthorne Works Plant of the Western Electric Company in Chicago.

He and a team of researchers took a group of six women and segregated them from the other employees. They then altered their conditions of work in a number of ways, over a period of five-years. They observed the effects on production and the morale of the group. During the study they changed the payment systems, rest breaks of different sorts and lengths, they varied the length of the working day, and offered

food and refreshments during breaks. In almost all cases, productivity improved.

Mayo was also able to provide concrete evidence to support Follet's theory that the lack of attention to human relationships was a major flaw in current management theories. He was able to prove that employees did react better when they had good relationships with the managers that they worked with. If management treated employees with respect and give them the attention at the work place that they needed, then the workers would be more willing to work harder for the employer.

At the conclusion of the study, Mayo felt that he had proven his point and closed it down, returning the women to their original conditions, a six day week, with long hours and no rest breaks or refreshments. Surprisingly, productivity in the group rose to the highest levels yet and Mayo had to rethink his conclusions.

In the end, he realized discovered three factors impacted the results:

- First, the women had felt important because they had been singled out;
- Second, the women had developed good relationships amongst each other and had been allowed to set their own work patterns;
- Third, the case of relationship had made for a much more pleasant working environment.

Mayo decided that work satisfaction must depend, to a large extent, upon informal social relationships between workers in a group and upon the social relationships between workers and their bosses. The

effects of the group should never be underestimated.

Mayo he wrote his first book in 1933 called ***The Human Problems of an Industrial Civilization*** on adapting Sociological theories to the studies he conducted. What's amazing is that he did this when he was only introduced to these theories in 1926.

In 1945 he authored another book called ***The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization***.

He published his third book in 1947 called ***The Political Problems of an Industrial Civilization***. Some of these problems he identified are corrupt officials and the regulations that industry has to comply with but never does.

The role that Mayo had in the development of the discipline and theories of management is usually associated with his discovery of social man and the need for this in the work place. Mayo found that workers acted according to sentiments and emotion. He felt that if you treated the worker with respect and tried to meet their needs than they would be a better worker for you and both management and the employee would benefit.

Mayo could not have foreseen the social and personal benefits the workers experienced as a result of management consideration, group affiliation, and special recognition. They did not see how much productivity could increase as a result of human factors and not environmental factors. This showed that stronger employee commitment occurs when management takes the time deal with them and the problems they had.

A simple thing such as giving a employee a little reward for outstanding performance could help motivate other employees to improve performance to gain that recognition for themselves.

Works Cited

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