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SMALL BUSINESS OWNERS/MANAGERS:
A FRAMEWORK FOR EXAMINING MANAGEMENT SELF DEVELOPMENT

by

Jeffrey David Young

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

at

Dalhousie University

Halifax, Nova Scotia

March 1994

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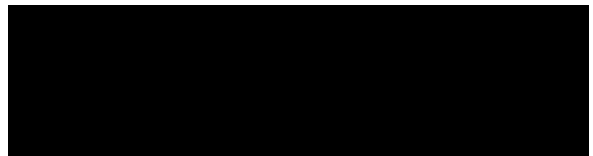
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For
my wife and son
Pat and Luke Young
and
my parents
Ev and Paddy Young

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ABSTRACT

Management self development is considered by many to be an appropriate development strategy for small business owners/managers, yet to date little self development research has focused on this large and important group. Based on interviews conducted with 8 small business owners/managers this thesis examined management self development among small business owners/managers.

Initially an overview of the small business sector and its importance to the Canadian economy and key elements of the management development of small business owners/managers were considered. A model of management self development based on the existing literature (focusing on medium and large organizations) was then used as a guide for exploring management self development among selected owners/managers.

Findings suggest a loose fit for the model but also indicate a number of issues that require further exploration, including learning stance, and the interpersonal, informal, and accidental nature of much of the management development of these owners/managers. Directions for future research are suggested.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction to the Problem

According to Drucker (1982) we have become a society of organizations. Tasks such as education and health care which were once performed by the family are increasingly completed in and by organizations. These organizations are most often run by professional managers whose main tasks focus on making the organization perform effectively (i.e., obtaining goals) and efficiently (i.e., obtaining goals at least cost). These tasks require managers to occupy roles in which they are responsible for the acquisition and distribution of scarce resources. Clearly, managers are of major importance to our kind of society and the development of competent managers is crucial. Further, there is a growing interest on the part of organizations in productivity improvements (Tregoe, 1987) and given the dynamic and uncertain environments of today and tomorrow, it is likely that managers must develop existing knowledge, skills, and attitudes (as well as gain new ones) to deal with new problems and opportunities (Certo and Appelbaum, 1986).

Learning new knowledge, skills, and attitudes will be required of managers in all types of organizations, large,

medium, and small, as well as those operated for profit and those operated on a not-for-profit basis.

Owners/managers of small businesses are one group of managers for whom management development (i.e., learning knowledge, skills, and attitudes) is extremely important given the size of this sector of the economy, the high failure rate, and the competitive and other demands of a dynamic and uncertain environment. The small business sector represents a major component of the Canadian economy and in 1986 there were over 800,000 businesses operating in 9 major industry groups (Statistics Canada, 1989). Beyond numbers and diversity, MacDonald (1981) indicated that the small business sector provides jobs, pays taxes, contributes towards economic growth, allows for an increased range of goods and services, provides more competition in the marketplace (it is often seen as an alternative to larger, corporate operations), and often provides more personal service. In addition to the economic benefits, small businesses are often the social hub of communities, and they provide opportunities for self-fulfillment for their owners and managers, and are often the breeding grounds for technological innovation.

However, the sad truth is many businesses in the small business sector fail (Dickinson, 1981). Whyte (1984/85)

stated that in Canada about 60% of businesses fail in their first five years of operation and the failure rate shows no sign of decreasing. The failure rate has been attributed to many factors including external, non-controllable economic factors such as high taxes and high interest rates (DiPietro and Sawhney, 1977; Ibrahim and Ellis, 1987); a lack of experienced management and a lack of diversification (Fredland and Morris, 1976); excessive debt (Whyte, 1984/85); and a lack of managerial skills (i.e., management incompetence) in one or more areas (e.g., accounting, finance, and inventory management) (Dainow, 1986; d'Amboise & Gasse, 1984; Ibrahim and Ellis, 1987; Kennedy, Loutzenhiser, and Chaney, 1979; Khan and Rocha, 1982; Larson and Clute, 1979; Peterson, Kozmetsky, and Ridgway, 1983; and Solomon and Carhart, 1982).

Clearly, excessive debt, high interest rates, and other factors can contribute to small business failure, but there is agreement among many writers that one of the main causes of small business failures is the owners/managers' lack of management skills (Garnier and Gasse, 1987/88). To combat the high small business failure rate, the development of management skills, typically through increased management/business training and education, is most-often prescribed (Dainow, 1986; Garnier & Gasse, 1987/88).

The result is the design and delivery of more traditional

forms of training and education such as courses and programs. However, according to Dainow (1986) more and more courses in small business management are being offered by various public and private organizations yet the number of small business failures has not changed and management incompetence is still often seen as the major cause of failure. And

The time has come to investigate our training and management-development efforts more carefully so that we can begin to assess if training is the best answer and, if it is, to determine what types of programs are best (Dainow, 1986, p. 10).

A review of the small business management development literature (discussed in more detail in the next chapter) indicates that this type of investigation is taking place (see for example, Garnier and Gasse, 1987/88). However, one type of management development, self development, is rarely if ever discussed in the small business literature.

Management self development has begun to receive some attention in North America from those engaged in training and development activities. For example, in a recent report on management training and development, Galagan (1990) identified and discussed a number of broad issues with respect to management development including the meaning of the term "global", needed skills for executives, and future directions for executive development. More specific concerns were managing technology transfer, learning to

compete globally, and managing corporate culture. However, one issue that stood out was that of self development. For,

Many people who work with executives believe they take too little interest in their own development (Galagan, 1990, p. 24).

For example, Warren Schmidt, a well-known writer and management professor stated in Galagan's report (1990),

My concern is the unwillingness of executives to invest in their own development (p.25).

The problem is that this notion of self development, more precisely management self development, which has been to some extent explored in medium-sized and large-sized businesses (see for example, Fynes, 1978; Griffin, 1980), has not been adequately examined within the small business sector.

Aim of the Study and Overview of the Dissertation

While management self development is considered an appropriate strategy for medium and large-size businesses, it has also been suggested that management self development is an appropriate method of enhancing the skills of small business owners/managers (Goss, 1989). The purpose of this study is to examine management self development within the small business sector to determine its role, if any, in the continuing professional development of owners/managers.

The remainder of this first chapter defines the terms - self development, small business and small business owners/managers, and provides an overview of small business in Canada. Following this, a review of the literature on management development and management self development as they are related to small business owners/managers is provided along with an identification of the relevant issues which guided the research. The third chapter presents the methodology used to carry out the research. This is followed by an analysis of the data (Chapters 4, and 5) and a discussion of the findings and areas for future research (Chapter 6).

Self Development

According to Pedler and Boydell (1981) self development is not a new process but is one that is being examined more closely than before in management development literature. Based on Canning (1984), Hague (1974), and Pedler, (1988a) self development is defined as a proactive process whereby the individual takes responsibility for determining and meeting his/her own learning needs. The direction and pace of learning are determined for and by the individual, and not by teachers or outside consultants. Reflection on learning events is essential and the focus is not only on the "what" (for example, learning about target markets) of

the learning but the "how" (i.e., the learner should begin to better understand how he or she learns).

The above notions of self development "belong to all people everywhere" (Pedler and Boydell, 1981, p. 7) and pertain to many facets of an individual's life (e.g., personal, social, or professional). However, from a managerial or organizational perspective, self-development is more concerned with making the manager more effective, not just simply a better person (Mumford, 1979).

Small Business

What is meant by the term "small business"? It is possible to use a number of criteria, individually or in combination, such as sales, number of employees, or dollars in assets to define a small business, but it is difficult to establish a definition that is acceptable in all instances (Starke, Owen, Reinecke, & Schoell, 1987). The fact that no consensus seems to exist on the definition of a small business has been well documented by Peterson, Albaum, and Kozmetsky (1986). Other writers have suggested one particular definition of a small business. For example, given the importance of productivity in today's economy, Miller (1982) has suggested basing a definition on the number of employees a firm has rather than its revenues.

However, for the purposes of this study, a small business is defined as one which is independently owned and managed (i.e., not franchised or not owned and operated as a branch plant or subsidiary) by one or more owners/partners and which has less than \$2 million in total revenues per year. The revenue criterion is based on the Government of Canada (1981) definition of small business which is commonly accepted and used (see for example, Young, McRae, and Forrest, 1984) although some writers (for example, Ibrahim and Ellis, 1987) add to it the number of employees as a criterion of size.

Small Business Owners/Managers

It should be mentioned that much of the small-business literature uses the term "entrepreneur" synonymously with "owner/manager". There are similarities between the two in that both tend to assume some risk and both operate businesses in uncertain environments. However, they are different in that entrepreneurs seek out and develop new opportunities on an ongoing basis (see for example, Long, 1983), whereas owners/managers are more concerned with day-to-day management of the existing firm. The interchangeable usage of these two terms may be inappropriate but the fact remains that the two terms are often used synonymously for

example, see Dainow, 1986). Thus, for the purposes of this study an owner/manager is considered to be one who owns and/or is in charge of a small business and is responsible for day-to-day operations, decision making and the outcomes of those decisions (Young, MacRae, & Forrest, 1984).

A Profile of the Small Business Sector

In Canada in 1986, there were approximately 2.4 million economic units in operation across five categories - self-employed salespersons, rental incomes, professionals, farmers and fishermen, and business enterprises. The business enterprises numbered 1,013,900 or 42.2% of the total number of economic units (Statistics Canada, 1989). Of these business enterprises, 823,831 (80%) could be considered small businesses (i.e., annual sales revenues below \$2,000,000). Table 1 presents a distribution of small businesses in Canada by selected industry group for 1985.

The figures presented in Table 1 indicate that small businesses are a major force in the Canadian economy in terms of areas of operation, as they are spread, albeit unevenly, across 9 different industry groups. Further, these small businesses account for approximately 80% of all business units in Canada.

Table 1*

Distribution of Canadian Small Businesses in 1985 by
Selected Industry Group

<u>Industry group</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percentage</u>
Forestry	15,634	1.9
Mining	5,753	0.7
Manufacturing	48,407	5.9
Construction	153,827	18.7
Transportation	83,019	10.1
Wholesale trade	53,521	6.5
Retail trade	190,029	23.0
Real estate and Insurance	60,810	7.4
Business and Personal services	212,831	25.8
Total	823,831	100,0

* - reconstructed from Statistics Canada, 1989, p. 13.

Implications of the present study

Given the importance of small business to the economy (e.g., providing employment), the high failure rate of small business, and the lack of research in the area of self development and small business implications arise. First,

this study provides an opportunity to examine and broaden our understanding of management self development.

Secondly, management self development within the small business sector, has been understudied to date and this study should provide some initial insights into the extent, relevance, relationships, and process of management self development in the small business context as well as provide directions for future research. Thirdly, the findings may have ramifications for owners/managers, small business consultants, and providers of small business management development programs in terms of who develops which skills, knowledge, and attitudes and how this might be done effectively and efficiently.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

Managing is like riding a bike - you must continue the forward momentum. When you stop pedaling (or learning) the bicycle will fall. There is no neutral gear in bicycling or management (Dalzell, 1985, p.27).

This chapter presents an overview of the literature related to management development and management self development of small business owners/managers. The review is based on the following machine-readable sources; ABI/INFORM (business-related periodicals), DAI (Dissertation Abstracts International), Economic Literature Index (economics-related periodicals), ERIC (education-related periodicals), ILO (labour force related studies), Management Contents (management and personnel related studies), and PSYCINFO (psychology periodicals).

Following the review of literature, a model of management self development for small business owners/managers will be presented.

Management development

Society is becoming a "nation of lifelong learners" (Mason, 1986, p.10) and there is clearly a need to learn new skills and methods of operation, the need for which is most often brought about by technological change. In terms of management development, the challenge becomes one of developing people for the future (Fulmer, 1986), but what is meant by management development?

Management development is

the process by which managers gain the experience, skills, and attitudes to become or remain successful leaders in their enterprises (Glueck, 1978, p.365).

The purposes of management development include increased effectiveness, increased job satisfaction and an increased ability to keep abreast of changes in job demands and management techniques.

Management development can be achieved in a number of ways and Wexley and Baldwin (1986) considered management development in terms of a three-part framework which included management education, management training, and on-the-job experiences. Management education focuses on

those activities traditionally conducted by colleges and universities that focus on developing a broad range of managerial knowledge and general conceptual abilities (p.278).

Training

covers those activities designed to impart specific

managerial skills (e.g., time management, delegation) which would be immediately applicable in a particular organizational setting (p. 280),

and on-the-job experiences focus more on the learning gained from directly performing a particular job. These experiences could be planned or unplanned and might include a variety of activities such as coaching, mentoring and job rotation.

Small business and management development

The literature on small business and management development has tended to grow in quality and quantity (Dainow, 1986) and a number of writers have identified the importance of management development for North American small business owners/managers. For example, Solomon and Carhart (1982) have suggested that the primary cause of small business failure is the lack of managerial knowledge and skill among owners/managers and further suggested that in the USA, given appropriate training and counselling about 200,000 failures could be prevented each year, 800,000 businesses could be strengthened, and 1,500,000 could grow substantially. Other writers have specifically suggested training and education, among other initiatives for reducing the failure rate of small business. For example, Dickinson (1981) has suggested there are ways to better the chances of a small business succeeding. These include effective planning (which

encompasses better education and training), appropriate timing and possessing appropriate personal characteristics. Whyte (1984/85) suggested financial management education which emphasized developing the need to understand the "prudent acquisition of debt" (p.59). Ibrahim and Ellis (1987) identified a number of strategies to reduce the small business failure rate including 1) creating a market niche; 2) developing strategic planning; 3) managing cash flows; 4) becoming a franchisee; and 5) entrepreneurial education designed to develop entrepreneurial and managerial skills. In addition, Peterson et al. (1983) reported that the most frequently cited suggestion, by owners/managers and managers of 1,000 small businesses surveyed in the USA, for reducing the small business failure rate was to provide better management education. Other writers, for example, Khan and Rocha (1982) identified problems that businesses face and proposed a number of remedies for example, defining the firm's target market. Although they did not suggest how one was to learn these strategies, it is possible that management development may help owners/managers solve the problems.

There is some evidence to suggest that engaging in management development activities results in higher levels of success. Research in Australia (Bailey, 1980), has shown that those owners/managers who operated successful firms had

twice the level of attendance at training courses as owners/managers of unsuccessful firms. Cuba, Decenzo, and Anish (1983) examined the management techniques of 58 women who owned small businesses in three metropolitan areas of the USA. A small but significant relationship ($r=.03$) between level of education and sales was reported. Gee (1987) reviewed a major report on training in Britain which concluded that higher performing businesses are about twice as likely to engage in training activities as poorer performing businesses.

Clearly there is a role and an opportunity for management development in the small business sector and it may contribute to the financial success of the firm. However, as the following literature review reveals, there is a tendency among researchers and some owners/managers to view management development largely from the perspective of training and education (seemingly in terms of the framework described by Wexley and Baldwin, 1986). Table 2 outlines the major focal points of the small business management development literature.

Target groups

Management development can be directed at a number of groups and Bailey (1980) has suggested the following possibilities; 1) intenders - those intending to become owners/managers of

small businesses;

Table 2

Focal Points of the Small Business Management Development Literature

1. Target groups - to whom should development be targeted?
 2. Training/development needs - who needs which training?
 3. Training methods - which training methods should be used?
 4. Preferences of owners/managers - for which issues do owners/managers have preferences? What are their preferences?
-

- 2) students in formal courses of business study - high school, technical school, universities;
- 3) owners/managers - those currently owning and managing their own businesses;
- 4) employees - those people hired by small businesses (and who may presumably move into managerial positions).

Clearly the development of management skills is important for all these groups, however, this thesis will focus on those who are currently operating as owners/managers of independently owned and operated small businesses. It is this group for whom possession of adequate management skills would be most crucial as they and their businesses are most at risk financially.

Bailey (1980) segmented owners/managers into training-oriented owners/managers i.e., "those who are sufficiently oriented toward training as a desirable activity to attend training programs" (p.243), versus non training-oriented owners/managers i.e., those "characterized by an expressed interest in training but a total reluctance to attend any education or training program" (p.243). Further, Bailey (1980) reported that in Australia, 80% of the owners/managers of small businesses were considered non-training oriented. Locally and more recently, Young, McRae and Forrest (1984) found the proportion of non-training oriented owners/managers in the small business manufacturing sector in Nova Scotia to be about 50%. Presumably courses and programs could be targeted towards those who are training oriented and the need for management development would have to be made more clear to those who are non-training oriented.

The issue to note here is that management development is often seen in terms of providing courses and programs to specific groups, clearly a traditional approach. A second focal point of the small business literature is that of needs analysis.

Training needs

Training needs analyses (i.e., the process of determining the skills, knowledge, and attitudes that must be developed) have been completed by a number of researchers. These training needs have been considered in terms of differing needs for specific industry or business types, more general training needs required across most business, and needs which differ due to differences in the firm's stage in its life cycle. These analyses often result in a call for more courses or programs of study for owners/managers (i.e., a traditional approach) or result in needs analyses that are from the point of view of those other than the owners/managers (again, a traditional approach, an outsider determines what development is required).

Small businesses may not only vary by training orientations of their owners but they may vary by industry type and management development needs may also vary. The broader small business sector can be subdivided into a number of smaller sectors (e.g., retailers, wholesalers, and manufacturers) and Gasse and d'Amboise (1981) suggested that as sectors vary, problem areas and learning needs vary in type and degree of importance. For example, inventory control may be a bigger and slightly different type of problem for a shoe manufacturer than inventory control for

someone in the service sector such as electrical repair. Thomas and Sireno (1980) focused on the manufacturing sector and identified owners/managers' perceived training needs and suggested the need for improved communication skills. Also in the manufacturing sector, Garnier, Gasse, and Cossette (1984) identified the need for increasing computer skills and being better able to manage stress. Reid (1987) focused on the service sector and identified needs relevant to it, for example, developing skills in advertising and sales promotion.

Other writers, have identified more general (i.e., across different business sectors) training needs. For example, Coleman and Nehri (1983) identified skills (e.g., time management) that would improve the owners/managers' chance of success. Paolillo (1984) suggested that small business managers are generalists (i.e., possessing skills in several functional areas such as accounting, finance, and marketing and occupying multiple managerial roles such as resource allocator or liaison) rather than specialists (i.e., being an expert in only one area such as accounting and occupying a limited number of managerial roles). It was suggested that management development programs should provide owners/managers the opportunity to develop skills in more than one functional area and to develop the ability to function in various managerial roles, rather than focusing

on one skill area and specialized roles.

Kroeger (1974) related the management development needs of small business owners/managers to the organizational life cycle, which can be applied in all or part to describe most organizations, large or small. As the firm moves from initiation, to development, to growth, to maturity and to decline (or revival) managers must occupy different roles. For example, during growth owners/managers must be able to deal with increasing organizational complexity (e.g., more employees) and during the maturity stage dealing with competition and product differentiation may be more important. These different roles require the successful use of different skills, if the firm is going to succeed and move into the next phase of the life cycle. Having built on Kroeger's (1974) model, Solomon (1983) created a model of small business management development. The key model components were to 1) identify the organization's stage in the life cycle; 2) identify different groups (e.g., owners, managers, employees) in need of development; 3) specify development needs; 4) match these needs with sources and techniques of development; and 5) identify cost and time investments. Clearly, management development needs will be impacted by the life stage of the firm. This concept was stated more simply by Smith (1980) who segmented businesses in terms of age and extent of structure. He identified the

"one-man show" - a business which is in its first two years and is just developing under an entrepreneur and an established business (one that is two years or more old) - a business which has an organization structure, requires planning, delegation and development of systems. While Smith's (1980) simple classification of businesses into one of two ill-defined groups is problematic, the major point is that problems and management development needs are going to be different for owners/managers of businesses that are at different stages of organizational development.

Whatever the basis of the needs analysis (i.e., based on specific business type, general business needs, or need based on stage of the life cycle), it should be clear that any courses developed should meet the development needs of the owners/managers or,

content according to the immediacy of the businessman's training requirements (Gonzales-Estefani, 1981, p. 410).

However, the end result of needs analyses still seems to be the development of more courses and programs, a traditional approach to management development.

A third focal point of the management development literature has been development methods.

Training methods

A number of writers have focused on various methods of training, many of which imply a traditional, teacher-centered course of study. For example, Duffy (1983) presented an overview of how to use the Critical Incident Method for human relations training in small business. However, there are several alternatives for management development programs and while not exhaustive, the following list developed by Peterson and Stephenson (1979) is illustrative: self training (e.g., reading texts, articles), college/university extension programs (credit or non-credit), co-op training (e.g., pooling resources with several companies and putting on a seminar or training session), government or independent agency programs (e.g., courses provided by local boards of trade), trade and professional association programs, correspondence courses, intern programs, to which may be added individual counselling and advising, group discussion, and coaching by a successful business manager (Smith, 1980). Of the above alternatives, at least five (college/university extension programs, co-op training, government or independent agency programs, trade and professional association programs, and correspondence courses) imply a program of development based on courses of study.

In terms of courses of study, Garnier, Gasse and Cossette (1984) showed that 76% of respondents in a survey of small manufacturing firms in Quebec favored an educational method that was a mix of lectures and participation. However, Weinrauch (1984) has suggested that methods of instruction be adapted to fit the profile of the entrepreneur as an adult learner. In general, Weinrauch (1984) argued that the instruction should be participant centered and should involve participants in cases, exercises and discussions. Further, Sexton and Bowman (1984) have suggested courses should be structured around problem situations which require novel solutions, and which entertain notions of risk and ambiguity. Case analyses should be individually rather than group oriented, and

The students' predilection for adventure might best be served by working with existing or would-be entrepreneurs who are planning to initiate a new venture (p. 25).

Similarly, Ulrich and Cole (1987) suggested improvements for the training of future entrepreneurs based on enhanced understanding of the psychological nature of entrepreneurs. These entrepreneurial types would prefer more active approaches to learning (e.g., simulation or discussion).

Based on the foregoing it appears that there are various delivery/teaching methods in the management development process and there appears to be some preference for and move toward learner-centered, participative, case oriented-

courses and programs. The major point is that management development seems to be seen largely in terms of the traditional approach to training and education. That is the design and delivery of courses and programs that are institutionally based and focus on learning needs identified by those other than the learner.

This traditional approach to management development is seemingly fostered by other writers who focus on owners'/managers' preferences for teachers/trainers and for intensive versus distributed programs, as well as other issues such as timing, cost, and location of courses.

Preferences of owners/managers

Many organizations such as banks, educational institutions, and industry groups sponsor management development programs. Typically the leaders of these programs would be titled teacher, trainer or facilitator. However, within the small business sector there are preferences held by the owners/managers for certain types of program leaders. Some owners/managers prefer trainers and program leaders who have been or are successful small business owners/managers (Bailey, 1980; Meredith, 1981; Ravn, 1980) or who have business experience (Reid, 1987; Young, McRae, & Forrest, 1984). Other owners/managers would prefer business

organizations, such as the Chamber of Commerce, to work with educational institutions in management development activities (Garnier, Gasse and Cossette, 1984).

In addition to the above, several writers have identified owners/managers' preferences for intensive (i.e., training carried out in a short, one-shot time period) versus distributed (i.e., training that is spread over a period of weeks or months) training programs (Bailey, 1980; Garnier, Gasse, and Cossette, 1984; Reid, 1987; Young, McRae, and Forrest, 1984). It is clear that the above issues are important if a course is to be designed and delivered. However, the point of interest here is that the focus of much management development remains on the traditional approach (i.e., using institutionally-based courses headed by teachers).

The focus on the traditional approach carries through to research on 1) timing, 2) cost, and 3) location of programs. In terms of timing, several writers have shown that many owners/managers have preferences for certain times, days and/or seasons for taking courses. For example, Garnier, Gasse, and Cossette, (1984) showed that a majority of manufacturing owners/managers (40%) in Quebec preferred development activities that took place on week nights rather than weekdays or weekends. Further, Young, MacRae and

Forrest (1984) suggested that most owners/managers (74%) in the small business manufacturing sector preferred the winter season for taking courses. As well, Mondays, Tuesdays, and Wednesdays were preferred course taking days to Thursdays, Fridays, and Saturdays.

The cost of the program is quite likely related to the length of the program and there is some discussion of prices of courses in the literature. Ravn (1980) has suggested no course fee or a relatively low fee. This may imply some government intervention or support which is likely not desirable given the findings of Garnier, Gasse and Cossette (1984) whose survey respondents felt the government should not be involved in training activities. Others, for example, Reid (1987) showed 73% of respondents preferred a price of \$20-\$40 for a half-day course and 88% preferred a price of \$60-\$80 for a full-day program.

In terms of location, Hills stated

Assistance should be provided as closely as possible to the owners/managers place of business (1981, p. 393).

This would no doubt result in savings of time and money.

Further, Bailey (1980) suggested that some owners/managers may have preferences for particular rooms or sites.

Although the room is not as important as the subject matter, many stated a preference for industry association training

rooms, others favored technical college classrooms. These latter two types of rooms were preferred because they created a more informal, less regimented, less structured approach to development than did traditional school or university classrooms.

The above issues of timing, cost and location of development activities are important if courses are to be offered, but the research on these issues reflects the traditional view of management development as institutionally-based courses designed to meet others' perceptions of owners'/managers' management development needs.

It is interesting to note in the foregoing review of literature that small business management development appears firmly rooted in the traditional approach. That is an approach where outsiders (e.g., academics, consultants) identify owners'/managers' learning needs and design and deliver courses and programs to address these needs. There are signs of some shifts toward more participative, problem oriented, learner-centered courses and programs, however, the traditional approach remains the dominant model of management development.

Within the traditional approach small business management development is seen largely in terms of training and

education as discussed by Wexley and Baldwin (1986). The basis is to some extent management education (i.e., a focus on institutionally-based courses and degree programs which develop broader conceptual skills for future use), but to a large extent it is management training (i.e., concerned with developing more specific job related skills needed now). The notion of learning through on-the-job experiences, the third component in management development (Wexley and Baldwin, 1986) is less evident, if at all. This, despite the fact that most managers learn most of their skills informally on the job (Lowy, Kelleher, and Finestone, 1986; Wexley and Baldwin, 1986). Further, learning from everyday experience is a key element in management self development.

Given the above-outlined focus on traditional management development, a question arises as to the role of management self development in small business. The remainder of this chapter reviews, analyses, and synthesizes the writing and research in the area of management self development to 1) develop a comprehensive model of management self development; 2) examine management self development as it exists now in the small business sector; and 3) use the model as the basis for further exploring management self development among small business owners/managers.

Management self development

The vision of the self-developing manager is one who is continuously converting everyday experience into learning and thereby continuously improving practice and performance (Pedler, 1988a, p. 3).

Management self development has existed for some time but it is seen as particularly appropriate for managers in the 1980s and 1990s (Pedler, 1988a). Management self development is but one approach within the broader field of management training and development and there are several definitions and approaches to it. An overview of some of these will not only highlight some commonalities and areas of disagreement, but will provide a basis for a working definition of management self development.

As stated by Pedler (1988a) management self development is rooted in the work of a number of writers including Argyris (1960), Knowles (1970) and Rogers (1969). For example, thirty years ago, Argyris (1960) described the key underpinnings of self development in terms of "learning to learn" and

Under true development, the individual is taught how to develop and is left alone to produce his own "outputs", from the process; to develop his own ideas of effective behavior (p.10).

Some steps towards self development include becoming more aware of self (e.g., one's leadership style), becoming more

accepting of self and creating a climate conducive to self development. However, an individual can only be responsible for his/her own growth, others' development is their own responsibility, one can establish a climate that helps self and others develop. Influencing others to self develop is based on the belief they wish to be responsible for their own growth, but one must behave with integrity, and one must create the conditions for psychological success. This success is more likely to occur when one can define one's goals, these goals are related to one's needs, one can see how to achieve one's goals, and these goals must be high enough that one must struggle to achieve them (Argyris, 1960).

For Hague (1974), the only real form of management self development was a form of "learning by discovery", the goal of which is the improvement of managers. The emphasis is on long-run learning and a planned, conscious effort is necessary. For Hague management self development

is the philosophy that managers will learn and develop only when they take the initiative (1977a, p. 24),

and learning will be enhanced when managers acknowledge shortcomings, seek out experiences in these area and reflect on the results.

Mumford (1979) considered management self development "an organised way of learning from experience" (p. 13) (although he wrongly feared that self-development may appear to be the

latest in a series of faddish management development techniques). For Dingwall (1981), self development is groups of people, working together to solve work-related problems in organizations and

Our experience in developing this approach has been that in solving together problems of common interest, the learners help each other in their own self-development (p. 29).

Canning (1984) stated that self development is a training concept that differs from other methods by focusing on the "how" as well as the "what" of training. Self development is

unique in that it stresses the importance of the individual taking responsibility for his own learning, that it is a proactive rather than reactive process, that it involves choices and consequences in what direction and pace the training takes place, and, finally, it emphasises the importance of change as a process, its organic nature and the ambiguity that can surround it (Canning, 1984, p.9).

For Pedler (1988a) the basic issues of management self development include learner centeredness (e.g., a focus on the needs of the learner), learner directedness (e.g., the learner becoming a participant in the learning process), and learner responsibility (e.g., the learner determining which needs are most important) for the what, when, where, why, and how of the learning.

This approach attempts to

increase the ability and willingness of the manager to take responsibility for him or herself, particularly for her or his own learning (Pedler, Burgoyne, and Boydell, 1986 cited in Pedler, 1988a, p. 2).

The teacher takes on the role of facilitator, helping the process develop. Further, managers work on real tasks not abstract cases and then reflect on their work. The reflections can focus on what was learned about managerial work, about their own learning strengths and weaknesses, about their managerial styles, and what needs to be learned next. This particular approach has two big payoffs, learning about something (e.g., cash flow) and learning how to learn,

that is, we begin to understand how to make sense of, and draw conclusions and lessons from, our own experience (Pedler, 1988a, p. 3).

Clearly all the above definitions are quite broad and this very broadness may create problems in terms of determining exactly what is and what is not management self development. Yet there is at least one commonality among the above definitions, that is the issue of learning. Further analysis of work in the field of management self development reveals more commonalities as well as points of divergence or disagreement.

Management self development is a proactive process whereby the individual takes responsibility for determining and meeting his/her own learning needs within the area of owning and operating one's own business (based on Canning, 1984; Hague, 1974; and Pedler, 1988a). The direction and pace of learning are determined for the individual, by the

individual, not by teachers or outside consultants and reflection on learning events is a must.

Several writers have outlined processes or models of self development. For example, Lesyk (1981) described a 14 1/2 point program for self development which included among other things balancing career with family, determining goals, assessing personal strengths and weaknesses, being responsive to change, and learning to choose. More recently Canning (1984) suggested a model which consisted of four stages during which the manager 1) identifies learning needs and goals; 2) identifies his/her individual learning style and decides on learning opportunities; 3) implements development goals through a self-development peer group; and 4) reviews learning goals in light of the self-development process. This model identifies some key issues but may be somewhat limiting in that self development can seemingly only occur in groups.

Examination of the above-mentioned models and others (for example, Hague, 1974; Mumford, 1986; Pedler, 1983; Pedler, Boydell, and Burgoyne, 1989) results in a more comprehensive model of management self development. This broad model, depicted in Figure 1 below, may then be used as a basis for exploring management self development in small business (there is little research on management self development in

small business and as a result the model is based on research in medium-size and large-size organizations). The key issues in this model of management self development include (a) the individual, (b) a development plan, (c) outcomes, and (d) barriers to self development.

The starting point in this model is the individual who through various means identifies skills, knowledge or attitudes which

Figure 1

A basic model for exploring management self development in small business

THE INDIVIDUAL -----> DEVELOPMENT PLAN -----> OUTCOMES

BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT

must be learned, maintained, or strengthened. These form the basis of a development plan which clearly describes goals and strategies for obtaining the goals. The third component focuses on evaluation of the outcomes of self development. Lastly, barriers to management self development must be considered.

The individual

The starting point for management self development is the individual who must become self aware (i.e., must possess an understanding of one's own strengths, weaknesses and learning processes)(Hague, 1974). Artingstall (1982) suggested that getting started on self development required diagnosing where individual performance could be improved and obtaining a commitment to taking action to improve

An important assumption we make is that self awareness and self management are greatly underdeveloped in our society and that a key help we can be to people is showing them that management of one's own internal processes is both necessary and quite achievable (Artingstall, 1982, p. 10).

Taylor (1985) discussed the importance of self analysis which allows the individual to identify strengths and weaknesses as well as prioritizing the skills which have to be developed. These strengths and weaknesses could be discussed with peers or superiors to achieve a more objective view.

Gee (1987) critiqued a government-produced guide to self assessment for business persons (e.g., identifying discrepancies between planned and actual levels of performance and identifying strategies to identify who needs which training), and while several problems with the guide were identified, self assessment was considered to be an appropriate starting point for improving management skills

and performance.

May and Kruger (1988) examined the notion of managerial mastery and identified four principles of empowerment: (a) self-mastery, (b) integrity, (c) effective communication, and (d) partnership. Adherence to these principles allows managers to act from a context of mastery which is a mindset where

managers must view events from a context that produces inspired action from themselves as well as from others (p. 57).

Within the principle of self-mastery is the psychological dimension where managers must become self aware and evaluate themselves in terms of how they think, act, and react.

The basis of individual self awareness is self assessment which may require the "unfreezing" of the individual (i.e., creating a need for change, Umstot, 1984). This unfreezing can occur in a number of ways, for example, facing a personal crisis (e.g., marital discord) or a business crisis (e.g., possibility of bankruptcy). The self assessment may occur as a result of reflection, or may be brought about by feedback from a facilitator or others.

Management self development is to some extent different from the more traditional approaches to management development which tend to focus on the learning needs of groups (see for

example, Garnier, Gasse, & Cossette, 1984, Reid, 1987). Management self development is much more individually oriented in that it focuses very sharply on the individual manager and his or her learning needs.

Having identified strengths and weaknesses is a necessary but insufficient criterion for self development, one must establish a development plan which articulates clear goals (e.g., enhancing a strength or perhaps overcoming a weakness, or both) as well as strategies for obtaining these goals. The outcome of the self assessment then is a plan for self development.

A development plan

The development plan should provide a clear understanding of one's goals and should identify strategies for achieving the goals as well as a time frame for completing the plan. The importance of planning in self development has been acknowledged by several writers. For example, Nash (1971) believed planning to be important because it allowed the individual to determine strengths and weaknesses vis-a-vis present and future job requirements and then develop a program to build the strengths and overcome the weaknesses. Germain (1984) described an eleven-point program carried out by a major oil company which was designed to encourage self

development and help provide a plan to attain it. The planning of individual self development was important because it was tied closely to the individual's career. A systems approach, consisting of seven steps, was outlined by Dalzell (1985) who used this planned approach to management self development with managers in the insurance industry. Planning was important because it allowed the planner to develop goals (broader, longer-term statements of desired end states) from which objectives (shorter-term, more specific end states that are desired) could be created. Further, resources can be examined and allocated, obstacles can be identified, and development methods selected and implemented (Dalzell, 1985). Taylor (1985) suggested managers should create a long-range plan of which skills were to be developed, and when and how they were to be developed. Care should be taken to not try to do too much at once and managers should be aware that self development is a cumulative process whereby one can practice one skill while developing a second. Planning is important because it allows learning goals to be set, priorities within these goals to be established, and a time frame for completion to be established (Taylor, 1985). In addition, planning provides a basis for evaluation of development outcomes (Dalzell, 1985; Taylor, 1985).

Having identified development goals, a strategy (or

strategies) must be selected, it is at this point that major disagreements emerge about what constitutes self development.

Action strategies for self development

There are many strategies that can be used in management self development, for example, Nash (1971) discussed the role of intelligent reading for self development and

To read intelligently means reading for a purpose and with a plan. ... The purpose of intelligent reading is to make an individual better at his/her job and to prepare him/her for future responsibilities. (p. 862)

The reading should cover five broad areas, technical know-how (i.e., skills required for acceptable job performance), managerial know-how, human relations know-how, reading for problem solving, and reading for accountability. Reading played a major role for Schechter (1979) who outlined a group-oriented self-development program for hospital trustees. Based on perceived needs of role incumbents and other stakeholders, topics were identified (e.g., assessing the quality of care) and a series of articles, written by topic consultants, were published in the association magazine on an intermittent basis. Trustees then read the articles as part of their self development program. Scores on a questionnaire administered before and after the reading improved significantly after the reading. Adamson (1988)

also championed the role of reading, albeit reading that is more specific than outlined by Nash (1971), in management self development. He suggested that bank marketers often need information (e.g., tracking industry trends) and much of what they need is readily available through particular resource centers. The commitment and time required to obtain this information can be substantial but can result in a major contribution to the managers' self development.

Fynes (1978) discussed the self development of salespeople in a major consumer-goods organization. Using a library of cassette tapes that could be borrowed from the training department, salespeople could use driving and other travel time to listen to tapes that covered topics such as sales training, sales management, and self development, to name a few. The program was considered very successful given that in the first year of the program, 163 of 220 eligible salespeople borrowed an average of 1 tape per month.

Griffin (1980) discussed a management development program in Canada Post which was based on self development and use of existing organizational resources (e.g., trainers, more experienced managers, physical facilities). The managers worked in groups to examine various managerial issues such as finance and labor relations. Activities involved researching and presenting various topics, acting as group

leader, reviewing a book, or leading a critique session. What was to be learned was determined early on by the group but the learning goals tended to be developed around corporate goals. Groups were comprised of managers from different levels who wanted to participate and who had shown some previous interest in their own development. The groups met about once a week for six months and provided learning opportunities for informal, face-to-face meetings between upper and lower level managers. Added benefits included the enhanced transfer of skills, which was due to the mix of in-class and on-the-job time (participants were able to try out new concepts learned in the classroom, in the workplace) and the fact that managers became more responsible for their own continued learning.

A more direct on-the-job approach to self development was presented by Dingwall (1981) who proposed a Start-Key Index (SKI). This is basically a checklist of management symptoms, that managers can quickly and easily consult to help identify, diagnose, and resolve problem situations. The 5 basic steps in SKI are 1) selecting a problem; 2) defining the problem; 3) considering the issues (e.g., is there a deadline?, what are the positives and negatives associated with the decision?); 4) determining the target or objective (this must be specific not vague, realisable, and immediate) and 5) in terms of the proposed course of action

asking questions (e.g., what is preventing achievement of the goal?). While the manager can engage in problem identification and diagnosis alone, it is likely that subordinates and/or staff will be brought "on board" to help solve problems and

We have always known that people learn only what they want to learn, and that learning is a social process, involving direct participation by those involved. Our experience in developing this approach has been that in solving together problems of common interest, the learners help each other in their own self-development (Dingwall, 1981, p.29).

Taylor (1985) suggested skills could be acquired in a number of ways (e.g., taking a course or reading a book), however, it was important to allot time and money to these ventures as well as practicing the new skills.

The above strategies suggest that self development can occur through several means, but within these, several important issues emerge. These include (a) real versus contrived learning situations, (b) individuals versus groups in self development, and (c) the role of the facilitator.

Real versus contrived learning situations

Hague (1978a), having worked with many managers in their development, believed it essential that development take place in real situations (i.e., everyday work place situations), not classrooms or other "abstract settings" (p.

13). Managers can only develop by developing themselves and the development occurs in terms of learning from real situations (e.g., completing projects or rotating through various jobs) not contrived situations (e.g., case studies). Some writers, for example, Artingstall (1982) and Canning (1984), focus much more on structured self-assessment exercises and Martin (1988) described a structured self-development process where groups selected their own topics which often included discussion of case situations. Other writers, for example, Dalzell (1985) have suggested that traditional courses through universities and professional associations provide other means for self development.

There is clearly a divergence of opinion here and a continuum from real-life projects and problems to self assessment exercises to case situation analysis to more traditional, course-oriented methods may fall under self development. While some of the above mentioned writers seem to have their own preferences for what constitutes "real" management self development, it may be appropriate to determine what it is that owners/managers actually do in terms of management self development.

Individuals versus groups in self development

For Hague (1977a, 1977b, 1978a, 1978b) the self development

group is a key issue and one cannot really have self development without a group. Others, for example, Artingstall (1982), Carning (1984), Martin (1988), and Temporal (1982) rely heavily on groups in their approach to self development. Yet Mumford (1979) questioned the role of the group and suggested that self development begin with the individual not a group. Clearly others such as Nash (1971) and Taylor (1985) found groups less important given that managers could identify needs alone and address these needs through reading. There are obvious differences of opinion with this issue as there were with the previous one. Again, it may be appropriate to determine what it is that owners/managers actually do in terms of management self development. Is it done in a group? Is it done alone? Are the two combined?

The role of the facilitator

According to Hague (1977a, 1977b, 1979) a major effort is required to get self development started and "some external stimulus is required" (1974, p. xiii) or managers will not engage in self development. A similar effort must be expended to keep it from coming to a stop and there is a major role for the facilitator (often called by other names such as tutor, teacher, trainer, adviser) as a catalyst (i.e., one who unfreezes people and organizations, showing

the need for change and learning). The catalyst's role is to make the manager aware that he or she should be looking for areas for self development, should help the manager define these areas, and should make managers aware of their own learning processes. Further, Hague (1977b) has suggested managers will be more active in terms of self development when they realize that self development is possible and there is something in it for them, to this end the catalyst can also help develop an appropriate organizational climate. One suggestion for improving the climate is for the catalyst to help establish an atmosphere of openness and trust, perhaps through an informal week-end get together among all levels of management which is loosely structured and encourages people to talk to each other (Hague, 1977b).

Once self development is "up and running" the catalyst has a role to play in keeping things moving. Hague (1978a) suggested projects, job rotation, and line-manager coaching as ways of putting managers in new situations where new questions have to be asked and new relationships determined. If projects (e.g., completing a particular task or solving a certain problem) are to be used, they should be organizationally significant, organizational wide and longer term. The project group should be composed of 4-6 members from different functional areas and likely of a similar

organizational rank (an important point is learning how others approach problems, not necessarily learning particular functional techniques). The facilitator's role here appears to be a balancing act, and

The tutor's function, therefore, is to make sure that the project does not fizzle out for any reason (and the most trivial pretexts have been seized on in early stages), to intervene as little as possible, to give or arrange for help when requested and to maintain the right amount of pressure so that the team sets itself high standards and sweats, but doesn't die (Hague, 1978a, p. 15).

Mumford (1979) questioned the role of the management development facilitator. Is it one of helping managers self actualise? Is it more concerned with improving organisational effectiveness? Is it to provide an array of courses? If the facilitator's role concerns self development, it was suggested that the facilitator review activities and skills required in the process, compare his or her skills against those required and consider his own development needs. It appears that the facilitator may have an important role to play but he or she should be clear just what constitutes that role.

Much of the discussion of the role of the facilitator appears to be self-serving, given that many of the proponents are consultants and facilitators themselves. It is appropriate however, to examine the role of facilitator in management self development from the perspective of the small business owner/manager.

Outcomes of management self development

The outcomes of management self development fall into three broad classes (a) individual measures, (b) organization measures, and (c) the learning organization.

Outcomes of management self development - individual measures

The importance of evaluating learning outcomes in self development has been acknowledged by several writers (e.g., Dalzell, 1985; Schecter, 1979) for developers must know if they have reached their goals or if they must change strategies or reformulate goals. Schecter (1979) described the evaluation process for a self development program for hospital trustees. The program was evaluated by comparing post-test scores with pre-test scores on a questionnaire designed to test knowledge of program issues. As well, qualitative comments about the level and sophistication of the material were solicited from various stakeholders. Clearly, an increase in knowledge is one criterion of management self development success.

Other criteria are presented by Canning (1984) in his model of self development: 1) has the individual identified needs and goals?; 2) is the individual more aware of and

knowledgeable of his own learning style?; 3) were development goals attained?; 4) has self development become an ongoing process for the individual? The role of reflection is doubly important, first because of its role in self awareness, and second because the individual must now reflect on whether or not anything was learned.

Further, Taylor (1985) suggested the individual outcomes of self development included improved individual performance, a greater potential for more challenging work and promotion, greater self awareness and self esteem which may lead to more confidence and more risk taking and creativity. However, self development will only occur if skills, knowledge, and attitudes are assessed, studied, practised and results evaluated.

It is important that individual measures, i.e., changes in attitude, skill, knowledge or behavior, increased awareness of learning style, and the use of self development on an ongoing basis be used. A question arises, do small business owners/managers evaluate the individual outcomes of their learning activities? In addition there are important evaluation measures at the organization level to consider.

Outcomes of management self development - Organization measures

Mumford (1983) considered the notion of increased managerial effectiveness as one of the goals of increasing importance to the field of management development and to those who ordinarily fund it. It is not sufficient for managers to know something, they must become more effective at taking appropriate actions.

If self development is effective, at the organizational level one might expect to see increases in organizational measures of effectiveness, for example, sales and profits (Mumford, 1983). This has some measurement difficulties, for example, a manager could have engaged in self development and learned many things but a fall in sales or profits could have easily been experienced due to uncontrollable factors such as increased competition. In a similar fashion sales and profits could have risen due merely to changes in consensus tastes. Organizational outcomes may be more hoped for as a result of management self development rather than easily measured.

However, there is another outcome of management self development that must be considered, the learning organization.

Outcomes of management self development - The learning organization

Some organizations are developing the notion of continuous learning, where all members of the organization are involved in an ongoing process of learning new skills. This approach to learning is different from traditional approaches to training in that the learner is an active participant, learning becomes a part of everyday activities and learners share knowledge and learn from one another. This continuous learning approach can be fostered through several mechanisms including use of content experts who are trained as teachers; employees who negotiate training goals with their bosses, groups of employees who meet informally to learn and teach themselves, and work teams which train each other and receive pay increases for new skills acquired ("Continuous learning", 1986).

To a great extent the above paragraph describes the learning organization as discussed by several writers including Hague (1974, 1977a), Pedler and Hughes (1986) and Pedler (1988b) who suggest that the learning organization is an outcome of the top managers creating the right climate for self development.

While some "unfreezing" of individuals is necessary, it may

also be necessary to unfreeze the organization, that is create an environment in which self development is fostered (Hague, 1974). Hague (1977a) further suggested that there is a right organizational climate for self development and without the proper climate self development will be hindered. This proper climate suggests: 1) some mistakes are allowable (if every failure is punished, no one will take a risk or try new things); 2) that the boss take on the role of coach, pushing subordinates to broader and higher levels of achievement (this implies the boss has job security and emotional maturity); 3) human growth must be valued by the organization (e.g., people should be promoted for not only achieving economic results but for helping to develop other people as well).

Lesyk (1981) believed that a productive work environment is largely dependent on the climate that is established by managers and

If that climate is supportive of people who are a part of it, then we can usually look for these same people to display the positive, creative, and mature characteristics that we seek (p.38).

This climate will help others self develop and achieve their potential.

Pedler and Hughes (1986) have suggested a climate for self development be established by having 1) top managers engaging in self development themselves; 2) learners join

and participate in self development or action learning groups; and 3) people establish their own learning goals, through auditing various aspects of their and others' lives.

Pedler (1988a) referred to the Learning Company

in which all members regard continuous life- and career-long development as part of what work means. Personal and professional development of oneself, and of one's work fellows, becomes a true product of that work (p. 18).

Within this Learning Company, self development is not seen as a replacement for traditional management development methods but as a useful addition, a complement. For example, the importance of meshing managerial learning with corporate goals and strategies has been emphasised by Griffin (1980) and Gee (1987). Further, self development has been related to a number of issues, including career planning. Germain (1984) described a program carried out by a major oil company which was designed to not only encourage but integrate both career planning and self development within the context of individual and organizational needs. The heart of the program was a guide which allowed individuals to examine career and development issues as well as obtain feedback about assumptions or receive other information from superiors, peers or friends. MacDonald (1988) discussed a number of issues which might help organizations identify those employees who were more likely to engage in self development. Results of a poll of employees who had attended a company-sponsored assessment

center and then continued to develop skills on their own suggested that employees were more likely to continue with skill development activities if they saw a logical connection between assessment center recommendations (e.g., attending a communication workshop) and the development of necessary skills (e.g., improved oral presentation skills). Employees who were younger (i.e., less than 40 years of age) and who had higher levels of formal education (i.e., had at least two years of college) were more likely to pursue developmental activities. Employees who desired to attend the assessment center had a stronger desire for promotion, perceived a greater chance of promotion, and were more likely to engage in self development. Finally, those who perceived support from the organization, supervisor and family (e.g., financial and emotional support) were more likely to engage in development activities.

There is a trend toward organizations recognizing the importance of developing individuals (managers and non managers). Line managers have an important role to play in encouraging and supporting the self development of subordinates. There is an implication that the range of skills possessed by line managers must broaden (e.g., developing coaching, mentoring, and counselling skills) (Barker & Sweeney, 1989). To the extent that managers engage in their own self development and create conditions

that help others engage in on-going self development is the extent to which one will witness the creation of a learning organization (Pedler, Boydell, & Burgoyne, 1989).

Clearly, management self development has potential outcomes for the self (e.g., increased self awareness), for the organization (e.g., increased profits), and for the development of the learning organization (e.g., a climate that fosters learning for all levels in the organization) However, there are many barriers to self development and its potential outcomes.

Barriers to management self development

As suggested by Hague (1977a) many managers do not develop themselves to the extent they could for many reasons. Some managers may not engage in self development because they are often impatient and do not wish to "waste time" reflecting, others have made it to the top by themselves and may see no need to develop themselves or others. Some managers, although quite competent, may be in a "rut" and continue to do the same familiar job day after day and may resist any attempt to restructure the job. Others may have "turned off" learning because of frustration or being in the wrong position and others may feel powerless in terms of doing anything to meaningfully change their situations.

Self development like any activity has risks and these include; (a) risk to the person involved (in terms of the individual failing to achieve his or her learning goals), (b) risk that others will not view the process as credible (e.g., if one fails, others may be turned off by the process), and (c) risk to the organization where

The organization may exchange an adequate confident not very self aware manager for a worried introspective man no longer confident, no longer decisive because he is no longer confident (Mumford, 1979, p. 14).

The risk of engaging in management self development may be too great for some.

Further, while the most important issue in the process is the individual, the environment in which he or she develops is important for successful development. Behaviors and attitudes of bosses and colleagues, reward systems, the organizational culture, and past experiences with management development can all have negative impacts. With self development, as with most organizationally-based initiatives, commitment from top management is important for success (Mumford, 1979). Without top management's commitment, management self development may be difficult or impossible.

Given the nature of managerial work (action-oriented, fast-paced, now-oriented, and crisis dominated) and the nature of

development (analytical, identifying learning needs and opportunities, reflective, stopping and thinking about learning situations, and future-oriented, becoming more effective at something with a payoff in the future), it is likely that many managers will not find self development attractive and it may not be done by all managers (Mumford, 1979).

Kaplan, Drath and Kofodimos (1987) who considered executive self-development as "the conscious, deliberate effort to come to terms with one's limitations" (p. 195), identified several factors that may work alone or together to impede self development. One key factor was the large amount of power executives hold, which often prevents them from hearing personal criticism or other forms of feedback. Secondly, is the notion of introspection, or looking inward at self, which could be a major way for executives to examine their own progress and learning. However, given the large and often sudden and urgent demands on their time, executives often have little time or energy for introspection. Thirdly, many executives feel the need to be or appear to be competent and as a result often have difficulty accepting criticism and admitting a weakness or admitting that some improvement is necessary. Finally, many executives have a long history of success and find it extremely difficult to change the very thing (e.g.,

management style) that made them successful.

Some may not engage in self development because it is possible that many organizations may cut training and development courses (which are costly) and transfer responsibility for development onto managers themselves (in addition to their current work loads) (Pedler, 1988a). Further, self development may be seen as something for upper-level managers or those ready for advancement and this may serve as an additional barrier to self development to non-managerial people or those who may not see themselves as advancing. This pitfall is particularly bad because

self development is appropriate for all workers in the organization as one strand of this effort because it is an approach capable of creating excellence that is beyond competence (Pedler, 1988a, p.17).

Barriers to management self development seem to fall into one of two types, barriers which influence the decision to start and barriers which influence the degree of effectiveness.

Several ways to overcome some of these barriers to self development were presented by Kaplan, Drath and Kofodimos (1987). These included minimizing status symbols so executives become more accessible, and making more use of performance appraisals and outside consultants to generate constructive criticism. Executives should also be encouraged to see the usefulness of introspection so that a

more positive attitude toward self-development is developed. Organizations may also have to be encouraged to allow managers to fail at some things at some times as long as they learn from their actions. Finally, executives change because they want to or because they must. If one does not want to change then a naturally occurring crisis (e.g., the possible bankruptcy of the firm) or a manufactured crisis (e.g., being forced to change your style or be fired) may serve as the impetus for change. However, the fact remains, there are many factors that can impede the process of management self development and managers must know and understand them if they are to engage in self development, increase organizational effectiveness and create the learning organization. From the perspective of small business, questions arise. Which barriers to management self development, if any, exist for owners/managers? What is the response to any barriers that do exist?

Two major issues emerge in terms of the foregoing review of literature. First, there is the development of a framework for analysing self development (see Figure 1, page 32) and secondly is the focus on large and medium-size businesses and organizations and a lack of focus on small businesses and other small organizations. However, the framework for analysing self development will be examined for its appropriateness as a tool for exploring management self

development by small business owners/managers.

In review, Figure 1 suggests that the starting point for management self development is the individual who should as a first step develop self awareness. In many cases "unfreezing" (i.e., creating a perceived need for change) must occur. This unfreezing may result from (a) facing a crisis, (b) introspection, or (c) feedback from a facilitator or others. The self awareness results in a development plan which has two main components (a) goals - which may include strengths and/or weaknesses, needs or wants of the individual that he or she may wish to address, and (b) strategies - which include various ways that one may go about the process of self developing (e.g., using a real or contrived problem in an individual or group setting as the basis for development). Other issues may include a role for a facilitator, which resources the self developer has readily available, and which methods (e.g., reading or taking a course) may be appropriate. The plan should then result in outcomes.

The outcomes of management self development include evaluation at two levels: (a) the individual - has the individual learned about his or her learning style or learned any skill, attitude or behavior? Has the individual continued to engage in self development, and (b) the

organization - has organizational effectiveness (e.g., sales) or efficiency (e.g., profits) improved as a result of managerial self development? Outcomes also include consideration of the organization as a learning organization. Is the organizational climate conducive to learning? Are others engaging in self development?

The fourth component of the framework refers to barriers to management self development. Which barriers exist? Can they be overcome? How have other barriers been overcome? Lastly, there are feedback loops which tie together the entire model. Do the outcomes (i.e., individual and organizational evaluation and the learning organization) increase self awareness? That is, are more and more individuals engaged in this process on an on-going basis? Are there particular barriers that preclude self awareness (e.g., not having sufficient time) or that preclude particular plans (e.g., not having sufficient resources) from emerging?

Figure 1 has emerged from research that focuses primarily on large and medium-size organizations. There is little consideration of management self development in small organizations, in particular, for owners/managers of small businesses. For example, in selecting a method for self development, Dalzell (1985) stated that managers should

"make this decision in consultation with your superior and training director" (p.29). In the small business the owner/manager is the top manager and there are not likely to be many other managers, and it is unlikely that small businesses have training directors. However, several writers, for example, Hague (1974) and Goss (1989) suggested that management self development is an appropriate strategy for small business executives. A question that arises immediately is, "what is the current state of management self development in small businesses?".

Small business and management self development

The literature on self development in small business is relatively thin and tends to be more implicit than explicit. Notions of self assessment and identifying needed skills have been discussed. For example, Gumpert (1979) has suggested that small business owners/managers can improve their chances of success (i.e., remaining in business in the long run) by building a balanced, motivated and committed team and secondly by having owners/managers assess their own strengths and weaknesses, then building on their strengths and knowing which skills have to be acquired or enhanced. Further, Kelly (1984) stated that successful small business owners are involved in community and professional organizations and,

If small business owners are to succeed, they must stop, plan and reflect on their progress. They need the training community's help to close the gap between what they know and what they need to know (Kelly, 1984, p.41).

In terms of the framework for management self development presented in Figure 1, self assessment is a cornerstone and skills identification a natural and necessary outcome of that process. However, do small business owners/managers engage in these processes?

Strategies for owners/managers to obtain necessary management skills have also been considered. For example, Weinrauch (1984) suggested entrepreneurship education should be fairly flexible and could take various forms such as programmed learning and self-directed learning packages. Self-study programs are geared towards learners mastering material on their own, at their own pace, without a teacher or other authority figure supervising, and have a number of advantages according to Bynum and Rosneblatt (1984). For example, logistical problems can be overcome, as there is no need to assemble at a common place at a common time; costs are lower than classroom instruction (considering instructor fees, travel time and expense to name a few considerations); the privacy of self-study programs reduces fears people may have about being slow to learn, or being seen as inadequate; there is a great deal of flexibility for organizations, these programs may not interfere with those programs that do

require instructors; and programs can be tailored to fit individuals' needs.

Self development can also be handled on a less formal basis (i.e., without institutionally-based courses and programs). For example, there are many self-help books which have been available in the past 20 or more years, to assist present and future small business owners/managers (see for example, Baumbeck and Lawyer, 1979; James, 1979; Knight, 1981; and Masatsugu, 1969). Have owners/managers used these in the past and are they still using them now? Do they plan to use them again?

In comparing more successful women small business owners/managers with less successful ones, Cuba et al. (1983) stated that the number of publications read was directly related to levels of sales and profits. And,

Keeping up with the industry through the trade magazines is a form of education and apparently does pay off (p.45).

Given that management self development may take a number of forms, several questions immediately present themselves. For example, do owners/managers subscribe to various business or trade publications or otherwise obtain useful information in these sources? There are other media sources, for example, television and radio, which often offer programs which target small business owners/managers.

Do they watch, listen to or otherwise take part in these programs? Why or why not?

A major issue surrounding self development is that of the learning group (Hague, 1974, 1977a). Do owners/managers belong to self development groups? Do these groups meet to address and try to resolve various "real-world" problems?

Based on the notion that management self development is an appropriate strategy for owners/managers in small business and the lack of research on management self development in small business, an examination of management self development by owners/managers in small businesses is appropriate. The guiding question is, "does Figure 1 represent reality for owners/managers of small businesses?".

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology

This chapter outlines the methodology used to examine management self development by small business owners/managers within the context of the framework described in Figure 1. More specifically this chapter describes the selection criteria for participants, the problems of gaining entry, the interview process, confidentiality, data analysis, and a rationale for using qualitative methods.

Selection criteria

Selection criteria were quite few and simple. The participant's business had to generate less than \$2 million per year in sales revenue and the participant had to be the owner (or part owner) and be engaged in the day-to-day management of the business. Within these constraints I attempted to broaden the cross section of participants by selecting 1) men and women owners/managers, 2) businesses that were younger (1-2 years old) and those that were older (beyond 5 years of age), 3) businesses that had 1 or 2 employees and those that had 10 or more employees, and 4) a

variety of business types (i.e., retail, wholesale, and services). These criteria provided a reasonable diversity of perspectives.

Gaining entry

Initially getting sufficient owners/managers to participate appeared problematic. A random sample of potential participants from a local business directory proved fruitless. Approximately 10 owners/managers were selected and contacted by telephone. After a brief introduction and overview of the study owners/managers were asked to participate. All declined, most due to a lack of time, some because of lack of interest. Several appeared quite surprised that they could be of any assistance given that their businesses were so small and localized. One owner's/manager's response was particularly interesting and memorable. After telling me that one to one and one-half hours was too long a time to grant for an interview on management development he suggested that that particular issue could be dealt with in a few minutes. In fact he went on to say that, "Management development is a little more mature than companies are involved in... In a nutshell, your 1 and 1/2 hour interview can be boiled down to less than 3 minutes."

At this point it became quite obvious that access was going to be a major problem. Using a strategy of "starting where you are" described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), I contacted two people I knew who owned and managed small businesses and one person who served as a consultant to small business. These owner/manager contacts participated in the study and along with the consultant provided introductions to other small business owners/managers (not known to me) who readily agreed to be interviewed. These personal contacts facilitated the process of obtaining interviewees. And several of the participants provided names of other small business owners/managers I could contact.

The interviews

Using an interview guide consisting of open-ended and closed-ended questions (see Appendix A) designed to determine demographic and management self-development information, a series of interviews with 8 small business owners/managers from the Halifax-Dartmouth area was conducted by the writer, in person. Initial contact with owners/managers was by telephone and following an overview and any discussion of the study, appointments were arranged. Interviews took approximately 1 1/2 to 2 hours to complete and all interviews were recorded on tape and transcribed verbatim.

Prior to the interviews, a pilot study (Yin, 1984) was conducted by the author interviewing one small business owner/manager. This allowed an opportunity for examining and refining both the content and the process of the interview guide. Following the pilot study, a pre test of the interview guide was completed with one small business owner/manager. This was, in the words of Yin (1984),

a formal "dress rehearsal", in which the intended data collection plan is used as faithfully as possible as a test run (p. 74).

The pilot study and pre test contributed significantly to the reliability and validity of the interview guide. Further, the multi-site nature of the data collection enhanced the external validity of the study. Lastly, participants in this study were given the opportunity to review transcripts of interviews as well as a draft of the thesis to see if they had been misquoted and/or misinterpreted. This backcheck also served to enhance the reliability and validity of this study.

Confidentiality

Participants were assured that responses would remain confidential and true identities have been disguised. Participants are referred to throughout the thesis by first name only (not their own). Tapes and transcripts have remained securely in the possession of the writer. As well,

the opportunity to review transcripts of their interviews as well as a draft copy of the thesis helped to ensure that they felt comfortable with what information was provided about them and their businesses (in particular, descriptions presented in Chapter 4).

Analyzing the data

The goals of the study were basically to explore this notion of management self development among small business owners/managers using the model in Figure 1 as a guide. It was not intended that "results" fit the model, rather the model represented a guide for initial exploration.

Analysis of the data while not problematic in the long run was tricky, given that this qualitative type of research is a newer area for me (to some extent I am more familiar with larger samples and analysis of quantitative measures). The data was analyzed initially by bringing together all the responses to individual questions. Questions and the associated data were then linked to various aspects of the model in Figure 1 to assess the fit. The fit between the model of management self development presented in Figure 1 and owners/managers of small businesses is discussed in Chapter 5.

In addition data from each participant was reviewed in a

"lump" and the data from all eight participants was reviewed in a "lump of lumps". It was through this top-down, broad-scale perspective that several issues began to emerge. These emergent issues are discussed in Chapter 6.

On doing the research

For the best part of my research career, both as a student and a teacher, I have mostly been exposed to and used more quantitative methods that to some extent were grounded in a more positivist tradition. In retrospect it may have been much easier to collect certain types of data (e.g., attitudes toward learning) that would have allowed me to analyze and discuss results in terms of more quantitative measures. However, after some attempts at constructing scales that might provide quantitative measures of management self development and discussion with and feedback from committee members and others interested in this study, it became clear that a more qualitative approach may be more appropriate.

The methodology was qualitative and exploratory in nature and was based on issues and procedures outlined by Lofland and Lofland (1984). The foundation of this approach was the case study (i.e., the examination of different individual owners/managers within the context of their own businesses),

which was the preferred strategy for several reasons: 1) questions of "what", "how", and "why" with respect to management development were being considered; 2) the investigator had little or no control over events within the sites under study; and 3) the focus was on events in a real-life context (Yin, 1984). The basic procedure was multisite, qualitative research (Herriott & Firestone, 1983) which permitted in-depth description of specific cases and also permitted "cross-site comparisons without necessarily sacrificing with-in site understanding" (Herriot & Firestone, 1983, p. 14).

In short, I was more concerned with exploring and understanding how owners/managers manage their own learning than in being able to generalize to the entire population of small business owners/managers. To do this the qualitative approach outlined above provided the necessary flexibility in data collection, allowed for sufficient depth to explore the issues raised in Figure 1, and in general appeared to be quite appropriate. Decisions about methodology were also to some extent related to what might be termed my educational view.

Educational view

Overtime I have come to believe that each individual is

responsible for his/her own learning. As a teacher I can indicate various areas of skill, knowledge, or attitude that should be considered from the perspective of learning, I can provide feedback in terms of learning requirements and I come to this process with a number of degrees and credentials and I am now seemingly espousing the notion of learning for practical purposes, not just learning for the sake of learning, nor just learning to obtain a particular credential. I have often told participants in my classes that I can teach all term and they might learn nothing and yet they also may be able to learn many things without me or anyone else teaching. This draws puzzled looks and looks of concern (not to mention the "this guy is crazy" look). Teaching and learning can be completely independent processes, teaching with no learning, and learning with no teaching.

My sense is that the process of management development should focus more on the learning issues (e.g., specific needs of the learner). However, it seems to me that much of management development (including some elements of management self development, e.g., the structured self development groups which must have a facilitator) is perhaps too structured, too didactic, too focused on education and not learning, and not sufficiently individually oriented. My intention in this thesis is to focus more on the learning

of small business owners/managers.

The results of the interviews are presented and discussed in Chapter Five and Chapter Six, however, the following chapter, Chapter Four, describes the study participants.

CHAPTER FOUR

The study participants

This chapter provides an overview of the participants of the study in terms of why they entered the field of small business and why they chose a particular type of business (e.g., retail versus service). The participants are indicated by first name only (not their own) for purposes of identification and continuity throughout the discussion. These brief backgrounds are provided to give the reader some insight into the participants, without divulging their true identities.

1) - Susan holds an undergraduate and a graduate degree, has 7 years of full-time work experience and is the owner/manager of a business-services firm. The firm produces videos for the tourism and hospitality industry and has one full-time employee and no part-time employees. The business has been operating for 3 1/2 years.

Jeff: The first question I am interested in is why you decided to go into business for yourself?

Susan: I don't think I ever really aspired to or saw myself all along as wanting to necessarily be in

my own business. But the whole act of winning an entrepreneurial award and the subsequent publicity and talk and ???? that led a venture capital company to come to me and say 'Well, we think this is viable and we're interested if you are interested', all of a sudden put an option on my plate that I had never really fully considered. It's not like ever since I was a baby I wanted to be the boss or anything like that. I'll say it was kind of happenstance.

Jeff: Why did you focus on that type of project?

Susan: Because it was the one thing I was familiar with or aware of that I knew Halifax didn't have ... It was something that was small enough to be done on a scale of one person could do it and start it and get it rolling. I wasn't looking at a big operation but it's not because I had any abilities or any technical capacity or anything like that in closed circuit television or in video production.

2) Diane - holds an undergraduate and a graduate degree, has 18 years of full-time work experience and is the owner/manager of a consulting firm. The firm conducts training needs analyses for organizations and then develops plans for the organizations for training employees and beyond the owner/manager has 1 part-time employee. The

business has been operating for 2 years.

Jeff: I'm wondering why you decided to set up your own small business?

Diane: I was employed in a very bureaucratic environment at the time and I wanted a little flexibility and I was hoping that the business would generate enough income that I could quit that job and do it full time. I just wanted a little more control over my working life.

Jeff: I see.

Diane: And I wanted to see more results. When you are working as one member of a large bureaucracy you'll see you'll end up doing a lot of things that will end up going nowhere and that can be really frustrating and I knew I had some other good ideas. I knew what I was doing in training and it was extremely frustrating to find that you couldn't do anything without a manager's approval and the manager wasn't interested in training so that was the kind of thing that started me up.

Jeff: Why this business in particular?

Diane: Building on my own expertise, I guess my strengths. I've been in teaching from elementary through high school to setting up French immersion programs for the past 15 or 20 years and I got

into computers, ah, because I was unemployed for awhile and decided to go back to school and took some computer ????? and I just fell in love with them. That's the answer. I then got involved with Atlantic Computer Institute for 3 years teaching programming and from that I saw a real need for corporate training rather than teaching programming to students. I felt the universities were doing a great job in that area where there was nothing at the time, here, in the province, was a very professional level of training, ah, teaching computer skills to employees.

3) Jack - holds an undergraduate degree, has 15 years of full-time work experience and is the owner/manager of a real estate firm. It is a full-service real estate firm offering residential, commercial, leasing, and property management services and beyond the owner/manager has 1 part-time employes. The business has been operating for 6 years.

Jeff: Why did you choose to go into business for yourself?

Jack: Basically because I wanted to be independent. I wanted to be able to ... the main drive was independence, to pick a profession or to pick a niche in some marketplace that I could feel

comfortable in operating. That was the main reason, basically to be an independent person, to be in control, hopefully, in control of my destiny, hopefully to achieve my goals,...

Jeff: So, why real estate in particular?

Jack: Real estate sort of gave the opportunity to - that it was not a highly structured industry and the fact that as an individual, you are one, independent, two, to be able to be as creative as you want with no constraints. In other words, there was ... it was sort of like, I feel, the last bastion of free enterprise. So I was able to use all business techniques that I could learn as I went. It gave me the freedom to be able to implement anything I wanted to do, basically, a highly service-oriented scenario - limited in regard to capital injection, great in the amount of labor. So I viewed it sort of as free economic labor and that the best opportunity for me as free economic labor was to be my own boss, was to be able to receive the rewards and benefits ... and real estate sort of gave me that opportunity - not in the first couple of years, but definitely in the last couple of years, over a period of twelve years.

4) Linda - holds an undergraduate degree, has 8 years of full-time work experience and is the owner/manager of a women's clothing store. Beyond the owner/manager the store has 1 full-time employee and 6 part-time employees and has been operating for 4 years.

Jeff: Why did you go into business for yourself, and why this type of business in particular?

Linda: I always wanted to have my own business. I grew up in a family-owned/operated business in Cape Breton and it was just part of what I knew. But we were a music business, and in Cape Breton, and I didn't want to live in Cape Breton. Clothing was always more of my interest. There was all kinds of ideas I had when I was growing up. It really was more of the fashion side - right from high school I kind of had that feeling. So I figured some day I would.

Jeff: Then you obviously have had an interest in fashion, and so on, but why are you in business for yourself? Is it because of that?

Linda: No, I always thought I'd like to be in this kind of business, this area of business, and I mean there is no other way to do it unless you're in business for yourself. I mean you would never be able to make any money, not that I am making all

kinds; but hopefully some day I will. But, no if I worked for somebody else ... I wouldn't make any money. Mind you, I've had jobs in management in large companies and I did, you know, I was doing quite well. But I couldn't stand working for somebody else either.

Jeff: It was not only the money, but there's a sense of ...

Linda: Freedom.

5) Brian - holds an undergraduate degree, has 12 years of full-time work experience and is the co-owner/manager of a sports-apparel store. Beyond the 2 co-owners/managers the store has 2 full-time employees and 5 part-time employees and has been operating for 5 years.

Jeff: Why did you choose to go into business for yourself?

Brian: Ah, I guess I always knew after graduation from university with a business degree that it was something that I wanted to do, ah, but I didn't know when it would happen or under what circumstances ah, it's just, it was something that needed to be fulfilled I guess. There's no particular reason why, it was just an aspiration. After, after having had some, some experience ah,

with some Canadian corporations ah, I knew would happen. It's one of those things that you have to do.

Jeff: Why this type of business in particular?

Brian: Why retail? Ummh, that was just by chance, that was not by design at all it just.... In my particular circumstances I moved back to Nova Scotia and was looking at other opportunities, amhh thinking that my time to go in business for myself hadn't come yet and then an opportunity presented itself and ah, ah, I agreed and so here we are. So I kinda, you might say walked right into it.

Jeff: And not only did it happen to be retail, it just happened to be sporting goods, sporting wear.

Brian: Yeah, I think the fact that it was retail and sporting goods ah, made sense because I'd been involved in sports and liked all aspects of sports and so on. If it had've been retail something else, it may have been hesitant and it may not have happened. Because at least going into retail amhh, I had, I felt I had some business experience, some business training ah, and knowledge of and interest in sporting goods. So the retail side of the business experience would come over time.

Jeff: It seemed a natural fit.

Brian: Yeah, that's right.

6) Tom - holds an undergraduate degree, has 22 years of full-time work experience and is the owner/manager of a firm in the wholesale clothing business. Beyond the owner/manager the firm has 4 full-time employees, 5-6 part-time employees, 2-3 commission sales representatives and has been operating for 15 years.

Jeff: Why did you choose to go into business for yourself?

Tom: I was working for the government and I had a great career working for the government and everything like that but the problem was at the end of it I was ah, I couldn't eat pizza and drink beer and I couldn't ... and a friend of mine was a pharmacist and he was selling me a case of Diovol a week. And I looked at it and tried to figure out, what's the problem here? The problem was basically working with the government was they paid you all kinds of money to figure out what the problems were, paid you all kinds of money to figure what the answers were, they paid you all kinds of money to figure out how to go about achieving the answers and then the exact opposite to what should

occur, did occur. So, basically if a guy wants to get something done, he can't stay with the government because he'll end up getting very frustrated or he'll end up in the Dartmouth hospital. So, amhh, I didn't really plan to get into this business, I just saw a small opportunity and ah, and it looked to me like it was ... it looked to me like it was feasible so I just took a chance.

Jeff: O.K.

Tom: But from the day that I started the business with the risk and everything else, I've never had to touch a bottle of Diovol and I can eat pizza and drink all the beer I want. So it's for my health.

Jeff: Why this type of business in particular? Why a wholesale business?

Tom: Like here again, I didn't pick it. Like it, there was just an opportunity to, to put together, to produce some product and distribute it and I just made some calculations in my mind and said if I go to X number of stores and sell X number of product, ah, you know it's gonna make sense and it's gonna be worthwhile. We also in Nova Scotia, it's difficult to make a living here on products unless they're amhh, at longevity unless they, and also because the resident population and tourist

population being so small, they have to be products that appeal to both. And the cost of designing a product when we bring the product out so, we plan on a product lasting forever as opposed to down in the States where you can bring out a product based on the return of Batman or the Batman sequel and sell zillions of it. But next year you can't give the stuff away. We have to design products so that when you have grandchildren those products are still selling.

7) Donna - holds an undergraduate degree, has 14 years of full-time work experience and is the owner/manager of a consulting firm specializing in fund raising. Beyond the owner/manager the firm has 4 full-time employees and has been operating for 4 years.

Jeff: Why did you go into business for yourself and why this type of business in particular?

Donna: Amhh, I have been doing this type of work for the better part of 10 years and I have been increasingly asked by other institutions to consult and it was always in the back of my mind. There was also no consulting firm in Atlantic Canada, they always came in from Toronto, and I was director of development (at a university) and

the consulting work just kept coming at me at the time and I decided that now was the time. It was something I had thought about for a long time but there was an obvious need because I kept getting asked. And so I Cape Breton was great, it was my home. But I really decided I didn't want to live there and I had lived in Halifax for years and years and years and so I decided it was already time to make the move and started.

Jeff: You felt there was somewhat of an opportunity?

Donna: Yes, there was a demonstrated opportunity at that point in time.

8) Bob - is a community college graduate, has 18 years of full-time work experience and is the owner/manager of a business/personal services firm specializing in courier/delivery services. Beyond the owner/manager the firm has 9 full-time employees, 4 part-time employees, and has been operating for 2 and 1/2 years.

Jeff: Why did you choose to go into business for yourself?

Bob: Well, I chose to go into business for myself because I worked as a courier with (another courier firm). I worked there for 11 years and basically everything I made, I had to give 30% up,

all the time. And I pretty well got tired of that. I didn't want to give people the money that I was making personally, where I had the chance of making a 100%. And I felt that being with this other courier company was holding me back. It wasn't showing my full potential so I decided to go on my own and try it and see what happened. It's been great ever since.

Jeff: Why this type of business in particular?

Bob: Well, it's a long story actually, but again because I was involved in the courier business I basically, over 11 years, you get to know quite a number of people and the lady that I am with now is a nurse at the Grace, although I did have my ticket to carry dangerous goods, it was her idea to start it in the medical field. So what we did was we combined the medical and the courier aspect together and we came up with medical courier company.

Jeff: So you sensed there was a bit of an opportunity there in terms of the medical side of things?

Bob: Well, we did a bit of research before we started it and what we found out was at the time, about 2 years ago, the Department of Health was, they were having a problem with the needles, like in doctors' offices, they didn't know how to get rid

of it and it just clicked to us, and we said well we know how to do this, we've already done it before, why don't we just make a push and get rid of the needles and other infectious waste from the doctors. And then from there it stemmed to delivering specimens, X-rays, delivering supplies to them, any inter-office correspondence. And then it just flourished from there. The reason we moved into the other field, to the commercial and government is because they found out that our delivery time was so quick because in the medical field are time sensitive. I mean if you're laying in the hospital bed you want that blood or whatever to get there yesterday. And people found out about that and through word of mouth it just started snowballing and you know we've been trying to keep that level of service.

The biographies of the owners/managers provide a foundation for the remainder of the thesis which focuses on an analysis of their responses to the learning issues raised in the interview guide. The following two chapters, Chapter Five and Chapter Six, examine management self development in small business in terms of its fit with the framework provided in Figure 1 as well as the themes of management self development which emerge from the data analysis.

CHAPTER FIVE

Fitting the Model

This chapter examines the results of the interviews in terms of the model of management self development initially presented in Chapter 2 and re-presented below:

Figure 1

A basic model for exploring management self development in small business

THE INDIVIDUAL -----> DEVELOPMENT PLAN -----> OUTCOMES

BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT

The individual

The starting point of Figure 1 is the individual and underlying management development in the small business sector is the issue of the individual, that is different owners/managers emphasize different skills as keys to success and also have different requirements for on-going skill development. It is clear that key business and

management skills required for success vary widely across individual owners/managers and types of business.

Susan: Well, I would say one thing that kind of gets you further than you might have otherwise is something along cash flow lines. There are lots of times where if you didn't have an appreciation for that, that you could have gotten yourself into trouble ... But in terms of skills, managerial and business skills, I see significant barriers to entry in terms of the whole financing aspect of the small business.

Jeff: In terms of running your firm on a day-to-day basis, month-to-month, what types of skills do you feel ...?

Susan: One of the most important ones is, because I was in the business by myself, was selling and that is just a key skill that if you didn't have any experience in it then you had to develop it pretty quickly.

Jeff: Because you had to sell this idea to the hotels and motels?

Susan: Sure, you had to sell the idea in the first place to get the company up and running and then you had to sell it on a daily basis to the groups who were featured in the program and so you had to sell ...

There were a lot of problems with the network when we first set it up and so there were a lot of technical things involved there but I, it's not really skills that you acquire for that benefit. Without question, the overall presence of the ability to sell is the most important thing.

Diane: Time management.

Jeff: Time management?

Diane: Absolutely key, I could do it no other way. Ah, it's hard to say. I guess what I am selling is knowledge. From my work in the corporate environment I have gotten a really good feel of who's offering training around here in the province and what training is quality and what isn't quality. So, what I am selling is knowledge and my management skill in order to manage that business is, ah, because there are not that many people to manage, I would say mostly managing my time and obviously client contacts and so I am managing the customer ...

Jeff: Managing the customer ... what ...?

Diane: O.K. that's a new term probably. It's a little combination of marketing and ah, it's belonging to a lot of different associations, contacts, personal contacts, ah, the way I market myself is

through word of mouth, through personal contacts and keeping a good relationship with the people with whom I worked so that they will recommend me to someone else.

Jeff: O.K.

Diane: Because of the service I offer, that if they are not satisfied, obviously I likely totally guaranteed our training recommendations plan and if things fall apart somewhere throughout will come back and redo it or recommend something else. So we would try and keep very close touch with the customer at all times.

Jack: ... most of the skills for managing my business that I can see is creating systems that I can implement to save time. So, basically anything that is time oriented, that will reduce my research and development time, to be able to promote my research in the marketplace is required. The biggest downfall in my business, in a lot of businesses, is time management and organization.

Jeff: So you want to create systems to give you more time to research, you want to create systems to allow you to do more efficient research and you want to be able to create systems to allow you to

market more effectively, more efficiently?

Jack: Right - basically, yes, that is correct.

Linda: O.K., well marketing, sure that's important. How you sell your store is good. But I think that with this store, the key so far to it getting where it is, it's recognized as good quality and really good service, and we're friendly ... And anyway, the key, other than that, now with the times being more difficult, the other key side of operating a business, is the financial side and tightening up the controls and knowing your margins and things like that. And that's what I am really working on now ... is getting a better control on that, those things. But the other key really is sales and service and being fair to your customers, and fair to your staff.

Brian: I think it's not just in our firm, it's probably for any firm. I remember I had an introductory accounting professor who was the dean of the school of business at the time, and he instilled in us, he said, "Accounting 100, you've got to have a good understanding of it, because it's the basis for all your business decisions." ... So that's, I think, in any small business that having

an understanding of the financial side of the business is very important because that becomes the basis for many of your decisions. Other skills ... getting along well with people, because when you are in retail you need to get along well with your customers of course, and it certainly helps when you have the respect of your employees, to get a little more productivity out of them. So, I think that's the key characteristic, I suppose, moreso than a skill. Some of our skills that we require are not fully developed yet. They kind of come with experience. We're learning all the time. But certainly marketing skills, those unless you were a marketing major or a marketing specialist, it is a new area.

Jeff: You do quite a range, but these are really the key ones?

Brian: Yeah. Today those would be the real important ones, because you can't do everything yourself, so you have to delegate, and you have to have confidence in your people. So you have to have the ability to delegate. And you have to know financially where your business is at all times. And you have to market your business. So without that it's very difficult to survive out there. It would be a complete struggle.

Tom: I've always maintained that as long as you are selling, it's O.K. A friend of mine told me that. So, I think the key thing is selling. You've got to be selling. If you are not selling, I mean, you can do all the analysis you want in your business. You can figure out all the scenarios. You can be the best manager in the world. You can have the best products and you can have the best margins and everything else, but if you are not out there selling the product, you've got nothing. If you are out there selling the product and you understand the concept of sales in terms of the empathy needed to the customer and the drive needed to move the product, I think everything else will come.

Jeff: Are there any other skills that you think are necessary?

Tom: Well, in the wholesale business, you want to make sure you know how to collect money. Because everything is on credit and if people don't pay, nobody has any money. Since I've started business, it's more and more difficult to collect money. And then of course there's all the other usual stuff. Like you have to know how to be able to deal with staff. You've got to know how to be able to deal with customers, and deal with

suppliers. ... I think the key thing in a small business, in running a small business, is something that the universities have missed, because I was in university, it is something that has been missed all through high school and growing up and everything else when people are supposed to have certain skills. Judgment - good judgment. Now, what is good judgment? I don't know what good judgment is, but good judgment is good judgment. You see, it has never really been measured, never really taught, never even really been discussed. That was the key.

Donna: The management skill, I guess, I find I deal well with people. This is not a management skill, But I have been told time and time again by clients and such, that people trust me. We shoot from the hip. There is no second agendas here. People are comfortable with that. Also, I am not afraid to say I don't know if I don't know. I will find out. And that is not a management skill, but I find that it is ... I have been very, very careful with growth. I have been very, very careful with cash flow. As a result, we have survived this. We don't have any debts.

Bob: One very important one is, I guess, probably chalk it up to the gift of gab, is for sales. I did have to get out for two months prior to starting the business. I just flogged the business as much as I could. So I guess one would have to be sales. Another one would have to be public relations, but not, I shouldn't say not, but in two aspects. One with the public, meaning the customer, and the other dealing with the office people, and with my drivers. So I guess the managing the office, and public relations with the clients and customers are probably, besides sales, I would say are the three most important. You should have skills, a fair knowledge in bookkeeping obviously; although I don't like doing that part of the business. We are doing well enough that I was able to hire an accountant who had a computer, so it sort of got me out of that. But I do have to know what is going on, so that I can keep track of what they are doing. You know what I mean?

Skill requirements were diverse among the owners/managers (e.g., selling, managing the customer, managing time, financial issues, and being able to delegate). There was also some overlap in that several owners/managers identified marketing and financial controls as being key requirements.

However, for some owners/managers financial controls implied different focal points. For Susan managing cash flows in general was important, for Linda it meant watching margins closely, and for Tom it meant managing receivables well. This individuality aspect carries through to other skills and knowledge that need to be developed by the owners/managers.

Susan: I know that there are a lot of technological changes out there that could be a benefit to me ultimately. I spend a lot of time now with an attitude mind development. Pop psychology calls it all kinds of things and management and psychology and motivation, but the development of the right attitude.

Diane: The only thing I'm concerned about is trying to keep up with the technology because in my field of computer training and training programs coming on stream.

Jack: Constantly. You have to continue to read. You have to be able to research. You have to be intelligent, you have to be able to to dissect the information that you could use to the best advantage on any program as instituted. You have

to know a lot of background knowledge, of course, of the parts, mortgaging, financing and so forth ... For example, investigation for the RRSP program is a major investigation. The investigation into the effect of the general sales tax for real estate - major, major investigations. We have a lot of expertise, a lot of accountants, a lot of lawyers to give you opinions, ideas. A lot of government sources, like Revenue Canada, Finance, Housing, Environment, and so forth. A lot of info comes from a lot of people. So, you have to constantly stay on top of those guys as to how and when ... every form of my business is investigation - regarding heat recovery systems for air exchangers for houses, regarding technology for housing materials, what's good, what's bad, interviewing contractors, interviewing building supply stores.

Linda: I should probably do more computer studies, but I don't have the time right now. I've been thinking about taking a night course or something maybe next Fall in computers. More of just getting better at it, like the word processing.

Brian: I don't think so, necessarily from a personal

point of view ... So, now it's a matter of adjusting our own way of thinking. And that's something, that's again something, that we learn about ourselves, is that you can't go on doing, operating your business the way we did even as short as two to three years ago ... We have to be more responsive.

Tom: Well, I would like to. Yeah, I'm not even computer literate. Everybody in that business is computer literate, except me. So, I should probably be computer literate. Is that the type of thing you are talking about?

Jeff: Yeah, or any other thing.

Tom: I should learn more about accounting. It hasn't really been of interest. I find that I don't really perform properly unless the types of things I'm doing, I'm motivated. So I tend to concentrate more on the things I like and the things I am good at. So I don't know if that's good or bad. I could take some accounting courses, and I may learn something, and I may not, you know.

Jeff: Are there any other things that you think you should learn about, besides the computers or the accounting?

Tom: Yeah, I should learn more about art. There is a lot of the things that we are doing is based on art. And I haven't a clue how that works. And it would only take a couple of days to learn.

Donna: I think in terms of ... There has been managed growth, but, I guess I have seen the company go through stairs. You know what I mean? There is a stair, we are not there yet, but there is a stair, maybe two stairs away, where my knowledge has to become different. I have to understand more about it, because then you are in a situation where you have to blossom and you are not as comfortable. I could keep it in my head basically the receivables and things, and up until recently, I have been able to do that. But this is a very clean type of business, because we are paid so much per month. It is a monthly retainer and it is a signed contract for so many months, so you know what is coming in and I basically know what is going out. I still sign all the cheques and approve all the invoices. So I can keep it in my head. We basically have to ... we're going to get away from that with more growth. When that happens, I need to acquire to know what I should be looking for. What signs can tell me that it is time to take

another little growth spurt? What signs tell me it's time to pull up the restraints. I have my own instincts, but I am still not sure about them. But I am always learning as we move along. I am still learning ... Also the things we have looked at is diversity, starting other things. I would have to learn a whole lot more about that.

Bob: I think I would really like to develop more skills in training my staff. I guess that is a good one. I would like to develop more skills in training them to be more creative, because if they are creative, it makes you a unique company. Creative in a good way. That is a good point actually, because I have been thinking about that recently. I would like to sit the boys down and talk to them and train them a little bit more in customer relations. Although they are doing a good job. I have a bunch of good guys. Again, you have to surround yourself with good people in order for your business to work well. But, it wouldn't hurt for me. I am doing that now actually. Training myself to train my drivers. As far as everything else has gone, I think we are doing pretty well. But it wouldn't hurt to have that ... and train my driver manager as well so that he knows exactly

... he does know exactly what I want now. But we have always got to work with the staff that we have. Even if we can get one per cent more out of them by training them, it is worth it to me. So I guess that would be it.

The required learning for the future is varied (e.g., keeping up with changes in knowledge, developing computer skills). There is overlap (e.g., learning about new technology), however, one owner/manager referred to technology in terms of new ways of producing videos and another referred to technology in terms of computer-based training programs.

These findings, that individuals have different skills and need to develop different skills requirements, based in part on the industry in which the business is operating, and/or its stage in the life cycle, and/or environmental constraints are consistent with the positions of a number of writers (see for example, Garnier, Gasse, & Cossette, 1984; Reid, 1987), and they do underscore the individual aspect of management development. There are several basic issues underlying management self development including learner centeredness (e.g., a focus on the needs of the learner), learner directedness (e.g., the learner becomes a participant in the learning process), and learner

responsibility (e.g., the learner determining which needs are most important). The notion of individuality becomes key in the issue of learner centeredness, everyone's learning needs are going to be unique.

Within the first component of this model is self awareness, which according to a number of writers (for example, Hague, 1974; May and Kruger, 1988; Taylor, 1985) is the starting point of self development because it allows individuals to understand their strengths and weaknesses and provides a starting point for development. Further, the model outlines various ways in which managers become aware that they needed to know different things or learn different skills or attitudes.

Participants in this study had identified different skills, knowledge or understandings that they needed to further develop and were asked how these learning needs were determined (Questions 11 and 12 in the Interview Guide, Appendix A).

For some respondents such as Brian, the self awareness came about as a result of facing a crisis or other problem.

Brian: Yeah. we learn by doing and sometimes, I think as any business, we learn from mistakes too, and we recognize that. Because even in retail, you can

break it down into your selling sporting goods versus selling hardware. I mean there is many, there is subtle, and very important differences between things that we sell versus selling produce. So, you have to treat different areas of retail in different ways. For example, somebody might say, "Oh, yeah, we're really selling a lot of men's clothing here, we might be doing really well", and certain aspects of retail may not be doing as well. What we do is try to ask ourselves, what may be the reasons for that, so that we can change something, if something needs to be changed.

For others, such as Diane and Linda self awareness was self initiated.

Diane: Well, I keep up with the reading and of course you see the product and you see it mentioned three times. I belong to three different associations. One is CIPPS, Canadian Information Processing Association and every time a new concept comes out, especially this new graphic interface and so on there's always talk about that. Mostly through contacts, customers or even the competition. I belong to associations that other competitors belong to and we certainly have open discussions about what is going on and I know right away when

I need to find out something ... So, the business is always there like a background noise and I'm constantly drawing from everything around me.

Linda: How did I determine that? It's just because now I am working on the computer, and instead of having to call somebody to have a letter typed up, I mean I can type, and I know how to do it, but I always have to check how to do it. It never comes out totally right. So I just would like to take a course on it. I'm not one to read the instructions. So, if somebody shows me, then there's no problem. That's why it would probably be better for me just to take a brief course. For Bob self awareness came about through the facilitator process, basically taking a course.

Bob: I guess it would have to stem from the course I am taking. It pointed out to me that maybe I could train these drivers a better system, better routes, maybe. Any aspect in the business, better routes to get to the clients a little quicker, or maybe public relations ... teach them that. For Susan, Jack, and Tom feedback from others, often informal and unplanned provided a source of self awareness.

Susan: There were a lot of people coming and going over

there, a lot of information being exchanged. It's a good spot if you can do it. You kind of drop by, put your feet up and have a chat with some people who are just kind of floating around and as a result of that you just kind of hear things. It's not because I've got any trade magazines that I'm pouring through on a regular basis or anything like that. It's much more osmotic, this is what happens to be going by and if I can pick something out of it ...

Jack: Because when a question is posed and there are so many questions, it's nice to know the answer. The thing is that if you continue to research you will be able to answer the majority of questions and if you don't know the answer you can always get back.

Tom: I keep an eye out and listen to what my people had to say. When things make sense, you implement it. But other than that, I haven't really given it much thought.

Jeff: O.K. So we touched on computer skills, some accounting and art. Is it that people tell you should know about these things that leads you to the conclusion you should learn more? Or do you sort of look at yourself and ...?

Tom: No, I observe that. I've talked to people like Clare who say ..., yeah, I discuss it with my friends to a certain extent.

Jeff: Who initiates that discussion, you? Did they initiate it?

Tom: Oh, in sort of a situation like this, you know, just throwing things out. We talk about the baseball game last night, just talk. I don't know how minds work.

Others, such as Donna, had a feel that change was bound to occur and would require new learning.

Donna: Because if I could just see, if we tripled our business, currently. First of all, you are right, I would have had to add the other layer, I change the scenario significantly. I can't keep the receivables and the payables in my head. I have to have someone to watch it. We would have to make changes in terms of more investments in leasing and that sort of thing that we don't do now. I have got us right in here to cut at any minute. With this recession, there was the writing on the wall, and I wasn't going to be stupid, and go out and lease for ten years. But I know it is coming. Also the diversification aspect, I have already been approached to start

other businesses. A fact that I had purposely stayed away from it just because at this point I don't think the timing is right. To be quite frank, I have been following my gut feeling a lot. Some days my gut has been knotting up. I don't know, maybe I have been locked into this, but yet there is some days that I don't think I am going to make it.

The self awareness that was generated by these owners/managers had different sources but they all appeared consistent with the model. It is interesting to note that for the most part that the process of developing self awareness resulted from reactive rather than proactive events and tended to be accidental rather than intentional. The issues of reactive/proactive and accidental/intentional learning are considered in a later chapter.

The development plan

The second major component of the model focused on the need to create a plan for self development, including establishing learning goals and identifying development strategies. Participants were asked if they had a plan in place to address their learning needs (Question 15 in the Interview Guide, Appendix A).

Diane: My learning plan is more long range, for personal development always I keep in the back of my mind this will benefit the business, the priority is not I need this in order to operate my business.

Jack: The plan is to adopt, since this is a total information flow system and everybody is engulfed in info that I am going back to writing my goals down, putting them in front of me on a daily basis, spending the 15 minutes to analyse what those goals are, what I want to do today and my goal is to everytime I touch a document is to do something with it. That is my objective, is to organize a system whereby you can take everything away from me, start with one piece of paper and deal with one piece of paper, one piece of paper, keeping in mind that it is no sense in touching paper, if you are touching paper you are not touching people, you don't touch people, you don't make any money.

Linda: Yeah, I haven't given it very much thought. Actually, it was just something I had mentioned to my brother last week. No, I have no particular plans.

Brian: No. No, and I think the reason for that is quite simple. These days, the retail sector in particular, seems to be, or our sector of retail seems to be so dynamic that a plan today might not be applicable a year from now. So, I must admit that in many respects, we just wing it on our own laurels, so to speak, feeling that we have enough experience to recognize when there is a problem, and then react correctly. So we don't have a long-term plan because a supplier we might be using today, we may not be using six months from now for one reason or another. Because there is a better one; there is somebody that has come out with a better price; because he is no longer in business. The industry, our industry changes so much. It changes every six months in terms of new products, new ideas, and so on, coming into place. We spend a lot of our time trying to keep on top of that, and it is hard to say, "Yeah, six months or a year from now, we want to be using these suppliers and selling these products", because they to a large extent drive the market. They dictate what the market is. We can only change certain things, maybe about ourselves, and we have made some efforts to do that, by going to these seminars. Now a lot of our attention is focused

on inventory management because that is critical and purchasing, which is part of inventory. We have to be learning from our purchasing mistakes in the past. We feel that once we do that properly, then we won't have to worry about as many other aspects of our business. Because when you are located in a mall, there is only so much you can do. The fact that you are in a mall, you do rely on the traffic and there is only so much you will do to attract people to a mall. You will go to a mall and much of our business is walk-by traffic, so we can do certain things during periods of the year, to attract attention to ourselves. But generally speaking, we rely on traffic in the mall.

Tom: No, I've made notes of it.

Jeff: You've made notes of it.

Tom: I've made notes to myself saying this type of thing needs to be done.

Jeff: O.K., but you haven't figured out how you are going to do it, or when you are going to do it, or where, or with whom?

Tom: No, I guess it's not a priority, is it? If it was a priority, it would be done.

Donna: Not normally. I guess I have watched things that come across my desk, and there is one that is of interest to me. I forget who does it now. But, there is a group that does offer some managerial training and it is basically fully understanding financial statements, and exactly what those mean, and I think I understand it now, but I would like to confirm again. But I have never seen anything for some of the target things that I would like to learn. Now maybe that means going and sitting with someone and saying, "O.K.", and fortunately, I do have some people who are very ... I have some friends who I trust with my life, and they have been great counsellors, and who are very, very knowledgeable in these areas. So when I find myself up against ... I go talk to them about it. Usually I confirm what I was thinking anyway, or I learn something which is good. But I do that frequently whenever ... there is nothing in place.

Jeff: But there seems to be an ongoing process whereby when you are not sure about something, or you you definitely don't know about something, you contact somebody, and ...

Donna: Yes, I don't hesitate for a minute.

Jeff: So apart from actually doing the job yourself, and

then perhaps thinking back on what took place whether the outcome was good or bad, another important source of learning would be your contacts in the field.

Donna: Yes, absolutely. Well, not necessarily in the field. They are people I know who know business.

Bob: Well I have. I've taken steps to do that now by taking the sixteen-week diploma course. Actually, it is through TUNS. It is the business management seminar on Barrington Street.

Participants tended to have no formal, clearly articulated plan for learning, their plans tended to be loosely structured, somewhat long range and a bit vague.

Within the development plan there are many action strategies for management self development for example, reading (Nash, 1971; Taylor, 1985), listening to tapes (Fynes, 1978), taking a course (Taylor, 1985), and working in groups using existing resources such as experienced managers (Griffin, 1980).

Participants were asked if they had read or read books on how to succeed in small business. For at least one participant, reading business books was an important

activity that impacted on her business thinking.

Diane: Well, I tell you, I can highly recommend The Entrepreneurial Edge, which is just fascinating, about what makes businesses click, the differences between a successful one and non ... I've read about ... of course I've read everything that's come out by Peter Drucker. I read it because he's got some good management theory and of course through Saint Mary's, Mintzberg I read, so I've got the theory but the really, the hands-on stuff, oh ... I read Covey's, Stephen Covey's Second Habits of Highly Effective People, excellent book, really good for ... There's so, much out there, When Giants Learn to Dance, I read that and of course the thing on excellence, everybody's read that, read Workplace 2000, I read ... I try to keep up with them, Naisbitt, Megatrends. But The Entrepreneurial Edge was very good.

Jeff: So they have to some extent impacted on your business thinking?

Diane: Yes, they have, on choices I've made, for instance, a main choice I've made is to stay very small, not to ... And I think I got a lot of advice from some of those books that I read, especially The Entrepreneurial Edge, where the

driving thing behind is you can't get carried away with your vision, you have to look at the market behind it. If the market isn't, it doesn't matter how wonderful your product is, you know, it's just not going to go, so I believe in my product, I know I can sell a fantastic training program and set it all up and organize it, and get the right people in place to manage it continually.

For others reading business books was an occasional activity that may or may not impact upon business learning or doing.

Jack: A fair bit, but unfortunately only chapters here and there. So, that would be one of my goals, to read those books because they are sitting in my library.

Jeff: There are some other sources, books. Books, you mentioned books, every second book you try to read is a business-oriented or self-help type of book.

Linda: Yeah, just something about business or something I might learn.

Jeff: Have you been successful with, I guess, (a) getting through as many as you want and (b) learning from them?

Linda: No, not always. I don't read enough. Then half

of the time, it's the same thing, I don't read the right ones. I've been reading all these Wall Street things lately, because there's been some good stories, but that doesn't really help me in my business. However, I guess sometimes in those things you can catch ways of doing things.

Jeff: So, when you say the right one, I haven't been reading the right ones? What do you mean?

Linda: Well, I know there's certain books out there for retailers and things like that, and I don't always read them.

Jeff: Because they don't focus specifically on your type of retail?

Linda: No, I just never really, you know, I buy them and then when I'm going to read a book, I just grab one that I'm the most interested in at the time. But I read all kinds of trade journals. I get, like a retail directions and all the credit cards come out, like American Express has stuff and I have one by this guy, it's called "On the floor" by Harry Friedman, did you ever hear of him? Really good pointers and stuff. So I read those things. Those are always good, and there is only so much time.

However, for the most part participants tended not to read

too many business-oriented books.

Brian: Not too many. Mostly because between the many hours we spend looking after our business and trying to find time for recreation, there isn't a lot of time left. And if there is time, there is not the energy. Not as much as I'd like to. If I felt we could spend less time at the business and have more time to ourselves at certain times of the year, anyway, there's certainly a lot of things out there that would be of interest. I rely a lot on The Financial Post to isolate areas of the economy, or like I say, occasionally you see some similar things related to retail.

Tom: No. The reason I don't is I think that the only way you are going to succeed in small business, the primary way, is ... I mean a guy can read all those books all he wants and it's the same as me taking a course or me taking an English course, if a person is not motivated, he is not going to succeed. If he is motivated, then everything else will fall into place. Now how does a person get motivated? I don't know what motivates him. It's different things. I don't know if you want to get into that. I was motivated because I had so much

pent up demand working with the government. I had so much pent up energy that it was killing me. Because they had done all this for me and they had shown me what the problems were, and they paid me to do all this. I knew exactly what had to be done, and how to do it. And nothing was happening. So for me to just throw a bunch of stuff in the back of my trunk and say, "Hey, buddy do you want to buy something? It costs this much. I'll sell it for this much. You are going to make money. It is made in Nova Scotia. It is a great tourist thing. People are going to be glad that they got it. Blah, blah, blah." I mean, all of a sudden the clouds lifted and the horizon was there and you could see. That's what motivated me more than anything. And at the end of the day I could sit down and see on paper physically what I had done.

Donna: No.

Jeff: So, it would be fair to say that the television programs, the industry-related magazines, and the other books aren't really major sources of learning for you?

Donna: No they are not. I read a lot of my own industry stuff about fundraising, but I read very little.

I find there is very little to read. We are not manufacturing ...

Jeff: So it is more related to the focus on manufacturing?

Donna: Yes, what Magna are doing this week, well, first of all, I am not anywhere near Frank Stronach. I find it and I read it for interest, but I can't say that I can take what I have learned there, other than sometimes it motivates you. I won't say that I don't read any of these things. I do but, it is not something that ... I read MacLeans, Newsweek every week.

Bob: No, the reason I haven't is because we have had so much material that we are covering in our class now, in our business classes. Here it is here actually. This is nine classes worth and I have been really busy reading up on this stuff, that I haven't really had time to sit back and start reading through other things.

It is clear that reading business-type books is not a learning strategy favored by most of the participants, although for some, books did serve as a rich source of learning. For others, the books tended to be read on the basis of general interest and much of the learning that

resulted was accidental in that participants "picked up" things of interest.

The same general findings pertain to business and industry-related magazines and other similar publications, although more participants tended to read them than the business books.

Susan: I buy them frequently, but I don't subscribe.

Diane: Computer World, Canadian Business, Working Woman, that's about it, well, what I can think of right now. Plus I read Fortune magazine, of course and there's a really good one too, American business, I had a subscription to it for a while. I forget what it's called, something, it's got business in the title it's got a really good section on technology and computers in the back all the time, but I let my subscription go because it was just too American.

Jack: The Real Estate Marketing which is throughout the industry. Globe and Mail - those are my two primary sources, The Canadian Real Estate Association industry publication.

Jeff: And you read them regularly?

Jack: As best I can.

Linda: I get Canadian Business and then I have the industry things, like Style, and Women's World, and WWD, Women's (something) Daily, anyway, out of New York. That's just fashion stuff. Women's Wear Daily, yeah that's it. It's good. Sort of gossip about the rag trade, but it's good to know that stuff, cause sometimes you can tell customers stories about what's going on. But, I read Fortune, even though it doesn't help me at all in this business. I try to read the newspaper, try to read both papers every day, and that's about all I can do.

While some did not read trade magazines and journals,

Tom: No, not at all. I used to read the business page in the papers. Generally, part of the reason for that once again is marketing.

others read them as a source of industry specific information and/or as a means of keeping with general business/economic trends,

Brian: I do, personally. The Financial Post, just to keep up on all areas of business, the overall picture and there is always articles in books that might be specific to what we are doing. I don't bother having those sent to the store, because I

never have time to read them there.

Jeff: Is there anything that comes into your store, I don't know, like Sports Illustrated, or any other ...?

Brian: Runners World magazine. That is about all. No, I shouldn't say that. We have some free publications that come in. There is a footwear journal, for example, that sometimes has articles of interest. There is a newsletter that comes periodically, just titled Retailing, I believe. Sometimes they have specific things in there to improve, areas of retailing, merchandising related, or it could be marketing related. It could be employee related. It could be related to better ways of dealing with security aspects. Things like that, little tips, that "Yeah, that's a good idea. I never thought of that", and we apply that. So that's handy.

Donna: Industry publications, we do, but that's really the state of fundraising. But, business, other than Business Week, or you know I tend to read those types of things, not all the time, but ...

Jeff: What do you get out of them?

Donna: It's sometimes interesting to see what other people are doing, but often they are talking about

people that are much, much larger than us. But it is encouraging to see how they might turn things around or something. A lot of it is ...

Jeff: It is just sort of general interest?

Donna: They are the way up the staircase, you know.

Bob: Consumers Report, I get that one. But here you go, I will probably put an ad into this magazine, Bluenose. I have put ads in Infomed, a publication that goes out, I think every two or three months in the medical community, and let them know that we are out there. I guess an awareness of us.

Jeff: Do you subscribe to these things as a developmental tool to help you keep up with trends or anything like that?

Bob: No. Well, I should mention that the girl that lives with me is a nurse, and she gets the Nurses issue every couple of months. I go through that. We actually get some good ideas out of it. So I guess we do do that. It is called Nurses. While there seemed to be more activity with business journals than business books, it seems to be more of a process of keeping in touch with industry specifically or just keeping up with business/economic issues in general.

Participants were asked if they watched business or industry-related television programs. While one participant tended not to watch these types of programs, more by virtue of her residence location,

Susan: Just probably by virtue of the circumstances of where I live, no, because we don't get cable out there and reception is very poor so at the best of times we have maybe one channel ... Given the nature of my business, however, I should probably watch a little bit more of it, but anyway ... most others tended to to have 1 or 2 favorite programs that they watched more as a means of keeping in touch with general business/economic concerns.

Diane: Not really, I like Venture, I watch Venture on Sunday nights, to me that's a fantastic program, and the news of course, but as far as ..., no, I don't.

Jeff: They do tend to be largely American, at least the ones I've seen.

Diane: Yes, very much.

Jeff: Certainly the MPBN ones.

Diane: MPBN ones and the CNN sometimes has something, but I find it very American.

Jack: CNN, Market Report - interviews with Donald Trump, ha,ha. Larry King Live - when the kids are in bed

asleep ... I always watch the National as best I can. I always like Venture.

Jeff: Why do you watch those?

Jack: Keeping on top of trends, trying to get the scenario with which way the economy is going, which trends are coming demographically, what trends are coming basically ... So, the broader information is, the better I find - pick up a lot of information from watching programs.

Linda: No, I don't. Again, I don't watch then right things. I watch Louis Ruykeiser on Friday nights, but he doesn't tell me much about what's going to happen in my business, but I find that stuff kind of interesting.

Brian: Yeah, Venture. Venture is a good one. I usually try to pick up that one and W5.

Jeff: You watch those quite often, occasionally?

Brian: Yeah, Venture, I usually try to. Unless there's a ball game on, depending on who's playing, I might watch the ball game. But if there's a ... I flip over, and if there's a relevant story, I find Venture interesting.

Jeff: Why do you like that one? Why do you find it interesting?

Brian: Because I think it touches on real-life situations, and it focuses on innovative ideas. It seems more often than not things that you don't think real business situations, real problems, and I find when I'm watching that, that they have often had stories depicting situations that I can relate to directly. That we have faced it, maybe in our business. I see how they handle it. A lot of times there are similarities. So that's a good one.

Jeff: Yeah. A real good learning tool.

Brian: Yeah. If nothing else, it can provide reassurances that the way we're handling things is a good way based on the experience of somebody else, and it might highlight problems that could arise in certain situations that maybe we would not have anticipated. Then you can see how they have handled it.

Tom: Venture is fun to watch, but I don't make a point of watching it.

Donna: Yes, I watch Venture from time to time, when I can catch it. I do find those things interesting. But one thing I do find, is that a lot of small businesses is based on people who make widgets,

not on consulting.

Bob: Yes, I watch McNeil/Lehrer Report. I am always constantly watching to see what's been going on.

Television programming appeared to be an important source for keeping current or just "picking up" things for many participants. And in general there appeared to be no favored action strategy for self development perhaps other than learning from experience.

Despite the seeming looseness of the learning plans, learning seemed to be an important part of the participants lives and in terms of the planning components within the broader model, real-time situations (i.e., actual on-the-job experiences) appeared to play a major role in learning. There is some acknowledgement that contrived situations (e.g., case studies used as part of more formal learning processes such as degree programs) contributed to learning, but not to the extent that real time situations did. Participants were asked how they learned the business and management skills they currently possessed (Question 10 in the Interview Guide, Appendix A).

Some participants acknowledged the role of formal business studies in their management development.

Diane: Ah, well I was taking an MBA, actually graduated two years ago, and that's when this business idea was growing the whole time I was taking these courses and I picked up a lot of really good hints on how to, ah, what makes successful businesses and we took a course in strategy/policy that I thought was absolutely excellent. It's absolutely one of the best courses I have ever taken. We literally took successful businesses apart to find out what makes them tick and just found that one point that stuck out in my mind is you can never take your customer for granted. All the advertising campaigning in the world is wasted if you don't get good word of mouth from your or don't get satisfied customers.

Jack: Basically, in most cases, by the seat of the pants - to a certain degree, I shouldn't say that - mostly from going - that is not correct - a lot of the information that I used was learned through seminars - that I implemented from, took information from training seminars over a number of years.

Jeff: So, where did you learn about your accounting, on the job ...?

Jack: No, actually that was before and after, including

the time spent for my business degree. I mean, a lot of that was coming from one business degree. Prior to that though, a lot of it was coming from straight budgeting prior to university when I was operating the painting business. The money comes in and you record it, expenses go out and once you get to the bottom - Bob's your uncle.

Brian: Anything of a financial variety, being a major in finance and having some interest in accounting and experience in finance. Those are skills that I had already had, and that I am now just applying or have been applying right from day one to the business. More so in the last couple of years, than before. Been on a couple of, as far as the other skills are concerned, been on a marketing side of it, been to a few seminars and that kind of thing, listening to speakers, who maybe didn't come out and tell me things that I didn't already know or couldn't figure out for myself, but they highlighted how it is important and how to go about making improvements in terms of writing an ad, for example. Subtle things that unless you study that aspect of business, maybe wouldn't be as obvious to you. So that came from speakers.

However, at least one participant downplayed the role of a university degree in developing her skills.

Jeff: You went to one of the universities. Did you do a business degree?

Linda: Yeah, B.Comm.

Jeff: B. Comm., did that help in any way? I've heard conflicting views.

Linda: Oh sure it helps. I mean everything you do helps. But no, I don't think it helped a whole lot. What it did though, it put my thinking in the business perspective. Because even though I had a retail experience growing up, it still was a summer job, and I was still a kid and you are not really totally interested, you know. But in commerce, it gives you the terminology and the marketing terms and just understanding, and the financial terms. You understand things better. That's all. It wasn't, I wouldn't say it was tremendous. But it was something I knew I had to do and you know you need that piece of paper. I couldn't stand going to university, and I did my degree in three years, because I jammed in my courses in the summers. I wanted to get it over with.

Tom: I went to university and Clare will tell you this

story too. I took commerce. The problem was that I realized I wasn't going to get my university degree, because I wasn't motivated. And to get a commerce degree you had to be doing accounting problems every night. I got 27 in accounting in my first midterm, and I transferred out to English and Economics. Anyway, how you got those skills? I would say largely by experience and observation. Not through training in an academic sense. Now that's just my own personal opinion. Like I'm trying to remember what I learned in university.

One participant suggested that more general life experiences had contributed to his overall development as a manager.

Brian: The delegation and getting along with people, that's just I suppose from many years of being involved in sports at the team level and in other areas. It is a characteristic that comes out of that experience, I think. I always got along with people. I attribute it largely to that, the fact that at very young years I was always involved with groups of people and I see myself more as a team player anyway.

And one participant stated that some skills and abilities maybe innate.

Tom: Part of it is innate, in that they're just with you, like some guys are good ball players, some people have good judgment, some people can play the piano.

However, most participants discussed the major role on-the-job experience played in developing their business/management skills.

Susan: Mostly by the seat of my pants and some of them in a very expensive manner. They were very expensive seat of your pants skills to learn.

Jeff: What do you mean?

Susan: Well, I'm talking about the skill of producing video production, I mean the level we are producing at, which is what's called Betacam, is the most expensive method you can use because it produces the best quality and for our needs we figured we needed to start with that because by the time it goes through cable distribution, questionable TV and you see it in your room, if you started with something less than the best, it could really look positively terrible. So when

you start out with, you're looking at \$2,000 a day to develop this skill because you've got a cameraman there and you've got a group there and you've got extras standing around and you're doing all this stuff and that you may not have done. Post production, you're spending basically in the vicinity of \$150 an hour in a post-production suite. So you make a few mistakes in there and they add up.

Jeff: O.K. Do you feel you have developed any skills, any new skills or perhaps strengthened any previous skills for working ...?

Diane: Since I started the business?

Jeff: Since running your own business.

Diane: Ah yeah. I think I have learned to say no. That time management thing. I used to think I could do anything or whatever I wanted, but I've learned to be, to draw the line and to say "yes, this is reasonable", "no, this is not".

Jack: Basically, in most cases, by the seat of the pants - to a certain degree, I shouldn't say that - mostly from going - that is not correct - a lot of the information that I used was learned through seminars - that I implemented from, took

information from training seminars over a number of years.

Jeff: And your time in other organizations.

Jack: Time with other organizations and the time that I put in to learn outside these organizations - a majority of the skills there that I use in management are based upon that experience. Taking an idea and changing it into what I need to do such as time management, for example. To give an example, at the Time Text industry which is quite popular in this area in regard to a system which is made up of, they say, a hands-on, experienced manager, that is continually interrupted on a constant basis by continually splitting up one's time into modules of time such as expansion of intellect, expansion of personal scenarios, business scenarios, and family scenarios, dividing your time up. Unfortunately, that is what we are all looking for, but personally I have not been able to do that, to balance those scenarios. But I am still continuing to try.

Jeff: Can you give me an example of seat of the pants learning?

Jack: Basically, yeah, time management, for example. taking an organized structure like a Time Text and looking at it, seeing it, viewing it and finding

out that it is not for you, So, taking that and changing that system, adding in what is more applicable to my business and doing it arbitrarily, not spending the time, not researching it too much, just going ahead and doing it, correcting it as I go. Customizing forms - let's put it that way. Going by the seat of the pants so that for the operation here is that there are many structures that you could fall into for accounting purposes and so forth for the business. And, finding out that maybe some of the frills and systems are not very good and that common sense ... an accounting scenario would be a good one. After going through the experience of having an accounting firm supply systems to you, that you don't really need - then going to Mahons and picking up a \$10 journal as opposed to spending \$500 for a system - that is what is seat of the pants - taking a more practical, common sense approach, looking at the cost and so forth of the equipment and the ideology of just going out and doing it.

Linda: Well I learned them from the time I was about 15 I guess, is when I started working for my dad, selling. I used to wear high heels and dress up

and pretend I was about 25 and sell pianos and organs. I think I sold my first piano when I was 16. And guitars, you name it, and I loved it. Then as I did it every summer, and then I used to plan when I was in high school, my courses so that I had the last period off at the end of the day so that I could go work, cause I loved it. So at Christmases, I always worked Christmases, did the nine to nines and stuff during Christmas holidays when I was growing up. And you just get a feel for it. That way, I got a feel for interacting with the public. And that was good for me and my confidence because I was a really shy kid, and that was a really good way for me to come out of my shell. then as I got onto that, and I wanted to learn about it. So what I did, was every summer I'd make my father give me a different task.

Jeff: I see.

Linda: And so, one summer, I'd do all the books, and another summer I would oversee, I would do all the cash reports of the stereo room and layaways and rentals, whatever.

Jeff: So, quite a broad experience.

Linda: I guess, I mean now that you've asked me, mind you, it was totally different than this in some

respects. And it was the old-fashioned family business, so we didn't have the same kinds of things to deal with like rents and leases, because we owned the building. Those things were never even thought about.

Jeff: But you've learned about them since.

Linda: Yes. Also when I was with (a travel company) for three years, I learned a lot there. When I started with the company, we had about 10 branches, and when I finished, we had 24 I believe. And we covered Atlantic Canada, so I did the marketing and corporate sales and all the ads, and I was advertising in each marketplace. It was interesting, you know, I learned a lot about the marketing side and a different view of it.

Tom: I would say largely by experience.

Jeff: What about something you learned on the job? Do you have an example?

Tom: Now that's experience. Oh, you learn all kinds of things on the job. Like one of the first things you learn is you never offend a customer. I mean you can rant and rave all you want, I can rant and rave all I want to you, and my friends, and the people in the office, and everything else about how awful the customers are. But they've got to

realize that the customer is the only reason that we are eating here today. And that if the customer doesn't want anything, never ever close the door.

Jeff: How did you learn that? You offended somebody?

Tom: I got in a fight with my customer, you know. The customer is always right. I got in a fight with a customer. The customer said, "Listen, I don't want to see you anymore." So, where are you going to be? You are going to be out of a customer. And in Nova Scotia, there are just not that many customers. And the other thing is, you want to develop an account, so you have them for the long term. It's a lot more work developing an account than it is taking a repeat order over the phone. So, I guess keeping the doors open. I learned that one in a hurry. I learned a lot of things I guess. it's hard you know. It's hard looking back on it to realize that until you talk to someone like you how much I have learned. I consider it as though I didn't learn anything, but ... But, follow up, follow up.

Jeff: You learned that?

Tom: Follow up. If you don't follow up, nothing is going to happen. Nobody ever does what they tell you they were going to do as far as suppliers are

concerned. If you ask somebody to get something out to you, you've got to follow up, follow up, follow up. You learn that anything that can go wrong, will go wrong. If there wasn't, there wouldn't be a need for management of business, would there?

Donna: I'm not sure sure I have got them yet. The business skills, I have two partners that have been in business for 17 years. People always used to say to me, "Why don't you do it on your own?". I did consciously go into this. I could have done it on my own. I was the one who had the skills for the consulting and that is the backbone of the business, which is why I own the majority of the shares. However, I wasn't being stupid about this. I had never run a business. I had worked in large businesses. I had worked at (a seafood company) for seven years, and I did all sorts of things, marketing to production planning. So I wasn't totally in the dark. But, I certainly did not run a business before. What I found out is as we went along, was that my instincts were right, but that it was very comforting to have someone say, "Yeah, we made that mistake, and we paid dearly for it." So it was reassuring to have that

sort of thing. To a certain extent, I am never positive that I am understanding everything that is here, so I consult with people all the time, people I trust.

Jeff: So it would be fair to say you learned most of your skills and knowledge and so on from actually doing these types of things?

Donna: Yes, that's right. I knew it, but I didn't know I knew it. I don't have a degree in business. There was nothing that I could say, "Oh yes, I know that is definitive", so I would always check with people, and I don't consider it, some people say, "I was talking to another business owner one time, so I would never do that, it would look weak", he's now having a real rough time. I am doing fine, you know. It is not a weakness as far as I am concerned. It's smart. My worst fear in the world is looking at those people up there and saying, "I'm sorry there is no paycheck". I am not that arrogant.

Jeff: So you learn from doing, and you learn from talking with others?

Donna: Yeah, and it is a lot of basic sense. I understood it immediately, but it was confirming that I understood exactly what was there. So, a lot of it made sense.

Bob: Well, again you know, working with the competition helped me develop a lot of skills. For one thing, it helped me develop my public relations skills. I mean, who better in the field of public relations is your drivers, as they are dealing with the public all the time. So that taught me a lot. That taught me a lot. It made me more open or outgoing with people, because of that reason I am always out doing stuff. I am not actually sure how to answer that. I just developed skills through eleven years of just working in the actual field, on-site training I guess you could call it. I did have a lot of other training. I did have courses that I took in business, such as in bookkeeping, and just dealing with people. I think that certainly played a big part in what I did. If I didn't have all these skills that we are talking about, I don't think we could have succeeded. And having the connections with people downtown. I mean I know just about everybody I think.

Wexley and Baldwin (1986) stated that about 85% of what a manager learns is done through on-the-job experiences. While it is difficult to place a percentage on the on-the-job experiences of the study participants it is clear that

on-the-job learning experiences are an important component of learning management skills and knowledge.

Within the development plan there is also the notion of organized groups of people meeting to discuss real-time problems as a major part of management self development (see for example, Artingstall, 1982; Canning, 1984; Hague, 1977a). Participants in this study were asked if they belonged to any group or organization that met to discuss business problems or issues of common interest (Question 16 in the Interview Guide, Appendix A). For the most part participants tended not to belong to groups and if they did, they generally did not attend the meetings.

Susan: No. Not at the moment but I have in the past.

Jack: I used to.

Linda: What, for resource groups, is that what you mean?
No, I joined a club, Halifax-Cornwallis Women's Progress Club, it's supposed to be for networking and for getting, you know, for helping each other. It was a waste of time. It was lunch every week and I just don't have time for that.

Brian: No, we don't. We have belonged to Better Business

Bureau in the past. But that was primarily for reasons of getting a better discount on our credit card purchases, our sales. We belong to the Canadian Sporting Goods Association. That is just for small benefits, but in terms of a group to work out problems or discuss problems, no.

Tom: No. No.

Donna: I haven't gone yet. It's just because I haven't been available when their meetings are. It is the Atlantic Women's Business Owners Association.

Bob: Well, actually the Board of Trade. I was hobnobbing around there a couple of times. They are going to send me some information. I've been thinking about joining that. The Better Business Bureau has called us a couple of times. But, I don't think it's going to ... if we are not doing anything wrong, I don't think I need the Better Business Bureau to tell these people we are alright.

Jeff: But there are no courier associations? People who own courier businesses that get together?

Bob:No. I sometimes talk with two or three other courier company owners. But I think they are trying to

get information out of me, because we have surpassed them since we've started. So, not really.

For at least one participant, Diane, joining professional groups and attending meetings was a key element in her learning.

Diane: I belong to OADE (Organization of Atlantic Data Processing Educators). Very, very useful group. This is what a lot of vendors belong to. People who sell training and you get a really good feel personally about how they operate, how reputable they are and I would not recommend someone to a company to do training if I hadn't have met them personally to know what kind of product they did. So that's number one priority for my business. The second most important one would be CIPPS (Canadian Information Processing Society) because that's where I get all my technical contacts and also most of my client contacts have come through that. So the OADE would give me the trainers that I would need to recommend and CIPPS would give me the people for whom I develop the training plan. The Halifax Women's Network would be my third line and mostly for people who share my level of commitment to small business and for support from

a personal level.

Jeff: Do you attend, regularly, meetings of all these groups?

Diane: Yes, that's the problem. CIPPS meets once a month, Halifax Women's Network meets twice a month, but I only go once, one Tuesday lunch and they also have their Wednesday night meetings, once a month. So I go to those usually. And OADE meets once every other month which is good.

Jeff: But do you find these group meetings ...?

Diane: Very helpful, yes. I also belong to the Association of Atlantic Women Business Owners, AAWBO, but I am not going to renew my membership. I have not found really any benefit to me personally or to my business although I did get one client through them. Still, it's very Atlantic, it's not Halifax oriented, most of their thrust is in Moncton and Saint John and they're trying to spread around the three provinces. But I find there is more focus on Halifax in the other three.

For the most part it appears that participation in formal, group activities and meetings as an avenue to increased learning is less likely to happen for the small business owner/manager. To the extent that small business

owners/managers tend not to have clearly articulated, formalized learning plans and tend not to engage in formal, group-oriented learning activities, they tend to not fit the current model of management self development.

Given that participants tended not to engage in formal management self development on a group basis the role of facilitator is far less important. For the one participant who did engage in the formal group activities the major benefit appeared to be setting up contacts and learning about others in the field so she could make better business referrals.

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The third component of the management self development model is the evaluation of the outcomes of management self development.

Outcomes of management self development

Outcomes of self development can be evaluated at several levels, individual outcomes, organizational outcomes, and the learning organization. Participants were asked how would they know if they have achieved their learning goals? Answers to this question tended to fall into one of three categories. First, some participants felt that evaluation was quite straight forward, for example, if you can't do something, you set a goal to learn and if you can then do that something, you have learned.

Susan: You set the goal and if you accomplish that, your learning has done for you what you want it to do.

Tom: The learning goals, you mean my specific technical learning goals?

Jeff: Sure, just general ones. Either one.

Tom: Specific technical, I mean obviously if you know how to run a computer, then you've learned how to run a computer, right? If you learn how to speak French, you learn how to speak a language.

Linda: Well, whether you do it or you don't and then if it works.

For the above group the evaluation was fairly straight forward and related to an individual's skills and/or knowledge. However, one participant considered learning outcomes in terms of impact on organizational effectiveness and efficiency.

Donna: Well, I know when my gut feel has been satisfied, O.K. There is a sort of ... yes, I have talked to people that I trust again, and the bottom line is there, and the bank accounts are healthy, and that's the confirmation that what I did was right. I shouldn't say I never know, once my mind is made up, that that's what we are doing, but the confirmation is usually on the bottom line or elsewhere. It is not something where ... I talk a

lot with people about finance matters, and I confirm with people before I even make a decision.

For others evaluation of learning outcomes was more problematic in that things were too difficult to measure or they felt they never stopped learning.

Diane: Oh, you never do.

Jeff: You never know or you never reach them?

Diane: You never reach them, it's a never-ending process especially, certainly in this business, in any business. I mean you want to keep going, you have to keep learning ...

Brian: You don't. You never stop learning.

Tom: You never know.

Jeff: You know how you know?

Tom: In terms of general learning, the way you'll know when you are through is when you are bored of it.

Jeff: When you are bored, O.K.

Tom: When a person becomes bored of his business, then obviously he feels that there is nothing more he can learn.

Donna: I think I can always learn more. I never stop learning. If the company continues to grow ... if

it doesn't, then we better learn why it is not.

Bob: I don't think that you ever achieve that goal. You never are going to be so smart that you never have to stop learning.

Learning is seen in a very positive light by all participants but its evaluation remains problematic. The situation appears dichotomous, either the learning is immediately obvious or easy to determine, for example,

Brian: I think handling of inventory is a little bit more finite process, in that you've learned when your inventory is at a manageable level. you know what it takes to keep it that way.

or learning goals are so many and change so often that one can never be sure if anything has been learned. There just seems to be a demand to keep learning, for example,

Bob: The way I look at it, you come into work, everyday is a learning process, because different things happen all the time. You are always challenged with one thing or another. So you are never going to stop learning. If you feel that you have reached a peak where you feel that you can stop

learning, then you are only fooling yourself. That's the way I see it ... I suppose there is one way to look at it. You could set a goal money-wise. You could say I want to make a million dollars. I'll have to learn the sales to achieve that to reach the goal. Again once you have reached that goal of a million dollars, you are going to want to make another million dollars. So, you never reach the goal ... Maybe you feel you have reached a certain plateau, and you have had enough. But I don't think you are that type of person. That's what I get from you. And that is the way I am. I think in business, you have to be like that, because once you feel that you have reached where you want to go with either your training skills or money level with the business, then you are never going to go anywhere else.

Related to this notion of evaluation is that of reflection. Participants were asked what they did when problem situations had been faced and dealt with. Did they think about what happened or did they move on? If they thought about it, what did they think about? The reflection process helped participants to think about events that may occur in the future and how they may be handled.

Jack: Absolutely, no question. That is the most important thing that I do is review, basically, deals, negotiations, techniques and scenarios that have happened to try and quantify those things, to future project what will happen in any situation. Of course, you do not always do it successfully, but you can certainly yes, review of history is the most important thing in my industry.

Linda: Yeah, sure. Sure, you always have to review everything in your mind or on paper to see it, so it won't happen again, or so you can improve on it, or whatever.

Jeff: Do you have an example of that type of experience?

Linda: I guess just day-to-day situations. If you have staff problems or there might be something that occurs that we hadn't dealt with before. Even like a lay-a-way or return or something like that. We didn't have a system set up for and the staff encounter some problems with a customer. Then we'll analyze it and deal with it, the present situation, and then come up with policies so that we know how to look after it again.

Some of the participants tended to engage in reflection, not only to see where things went wrong but also to see where

things went right.

Brian: We, or I myself anyway, we continue operating, but we do, I do look back and think, well, that particular situation, we didn't handle that as well as we could have. It created a problem, but let's understand what it is, so that it doesn't happen again. But the most important thing is that, we have learned from a mistake we've made. Everybody is going to make those mistakes, and I think that's another thing that I have learned, is that you will make mistakes. You try to keep them to a minimum and you try to keep the serious nature of them as small as possible.

Jeff: So given that it is not a mistake, and in fact that it is a real success, do you still look back and say ...?

Brian: Yeah, I always look back, look back and see what we've done right, because out of that you see maybe what you've done wrong. Because if you don't look back, if you don't see the good things, in looking for the good things, you might find some of the bad things and vice versa. So, I think you do have to look back a bit on your history to make sure that you do right, some of the things you've been doing, but also to correct

anything you haven't been doing right and learn from them.

Tom: ... then we try and figure out why that happened, but we don't analyze the process of how it got to be like that.

Jeff: What do you analyze? What do you look at?

Tom: Well, O.K., then you go around and say, "Is this selling? No. Why not? No. it isn't, then why do you think it is not selling? Well, price might be too high, or the colors are wrong, or it is not displayed properly, or stuff in it is not packaged properly, or who knows?".

Jeff: But do you say, "Well, last time we developed a product like this, and we went through this process, we priced it too high. Now let's be sure we check our pricing this trip".

Tom: Well, it's hard to say, because the problem is there is so many different factors involved in why something sells or why something doesn't sell, that it is really difficult to measure exactly. The stuff that you figure won't sell will. The stuff that you figure will sell won't. The stuff that you figure is priced too high, flies out the door. The stuff that you figure is priced too low won't move. You see that, you see that a lot. So, I think the other key thing is, like I say,

decision-making process or anything in small business, if you are going to be there, and you are going to be on the edge, you've got to keep an open mind about everything all the time. The key thing of being in a small business is that there is some degree of flexibility. And that in fact you have the ability to react quickly and so you just cannot have a mind set. You just should be prepared to accept anything. And that's the fun of it.

Donna: I think I reflect on everything that I do all the time. Quite frequently, and one thing that we try to do is a reflection even if it did go well, make it better.

Jeff: O.K.

Donna: That is ... we're new in the field, we are a new kid on the block. We have made our mark, but we have to be smart. Don't get comfy, or you will be out of business.

Jeff: Yes. You are looking at not only what went wrong, but what went right?

Donna: Oh yes, absolutely.

Others, for various reasons, tended not to engage in any reflection of the problem or situation.

Susan: I don't think I spend a whole lot of time sitting and thinking about things that I've learned or how I may have treated something or how I may have, what I might have come up with ... I don't really spend any time thinking about it or wondering how I came upon that particular solution or that thing.

Diane: Well, I'd say I moved on because what I did was I kept her on as my accountant. She's excellent. She solved the problem at that time and set up the books for me and just told me everything and she's great. I can call her any time I have a problem. That is an area I don't need to develop any expertise in because I can count on somebody who has it.

Bob: I don't reflect back because I know it was fixed up right and I don't have any problems with that. I think if you sit down and you have some problems every now and then, and you fix them by one means or another. If you sit back and just think about everything you did all the time, you never will go forward, the way I see it. You always have to see what is ahead. You always have to keep your best foot ahead. That is the way I look at it.

Otherwise you would lose sight. Again, it is hard for me to explain, but if I don't sit back and ... sometimes I think back, but only in a sentimental sort of way, reflect back.

From Canning's (1984) view reflection is a major component of management self development and to the extent that owners/managers are not engaging in reflection is the extent to which they are not managing their own development.

The third component of outcomes focused on the learning organization.

The learning organization

To examine the development of the learning organization participants were asked how important it was for employees in their firms to develop new skills, knowledge or attitudes.

Susan: Oh yes, without question.

Diane: Very important. Very, very important.

Jack: Very important. Skills in the operation and in my case, in this operation, basically is the ability

to - it is always a hard thing to have a situation where you are trying to convey what you want to do to somebody else. So, there is always the trying to hone somebody to think the same way you do. Which is almost impossible to do. But, in that respect would be to try to have the time to put out - to use to have them follow your systems so they could think forward, to project what you are going to do.

Linda: I think it's most important for my full timer to learn. It's really important for her self-esteem. Everybody is different. They have different expectations of themselves. And in retail, usually the type of people you have hired, don't have as high expectations. As far as all the part timers and stuff, I get everybody involved and everybody does almost everything in the store.

Jeff: O.K. So you give them the opportunity to work through.

Linda: Well we all clean and we all do inventory and we all do the crap, and we have fun too. We have fashion shows and all kinds of stuff and everybody gets a reward. So that keeps it interesting and they're not just doing all of the same routine.

Brian: I think it is important certainly for continued

success of our business, but, on the other hand, admittedly, we don't place enough emphasis on that. That's right now, partly because the resources are not there maybe to provide training where training is necessary. We tend to provide more on-the-spot training, by passing on some of our skills onto them, hopefully. And that has worked to some extent. I like to think that knowing that in a retail kind of operation, you are not going to have people work for you for the rest of their lives, because there is only limited opportunity there. But, I like to think that we have young people as our employees that they will learn some skills that they can carry on with them to whatever. So we don't put a lot of emphasis on training, only because we're too small to expect any one employee to be a lifetime employee. I feel that we do develop certain skills that they don't realize that maybe they have learned. Only when they have left, and have gone on to something else, they might look back and realize, "Yeah, I learned that from working there".

Jeff: What would be an example of that?

Brian: Well, for a lot of our employees, just because they come to us at 16 or 17, 18 years old. They are very shy and have difficulty opening up and

dealing with people. So that would be kind of a skill that is developed either earlier on, or in some cases, later on. Working efficiently, just doing simple tasks. They would learn from watching us or from being around us that what's important, how to handle situations, and everything from pricing, and why that's important, and why it is important that things are keyed in correctly, and where information comes from, and how we make decisions, and on what basis we make decisions, and why we make those decisions. So they learn by being around ourselves a lot of the things that we do and why they are important. So they really learn a lot about our business. Say to the point where they know almost as much as we do, other than the workings of the financial statements.

Tom: I think it is important. Yeah, they need to be challenged.

Jeff: Do you do that?

Tom: No, I don't think I do, to be honest with you. I'd like to but I don't.

Donna: It is very important. In this industry, you can't really go out and hire ... there is not really a lot of people who know how to do this.

Especially, with the number of different clients that we deal with. We are not just doing one thing, we are not just doing annual funds, we are doing capital campaigns, all kinds of different things. So it is very, very important, especially with a small firm, that they are intermeshed, that everyone understands what everyone else is doing. I very much make a conscious effort to do that. I won't say that everyone is on an equal par. There are some people, who that is their strong point. That is why they were hired, and they will remain queen or king of that area. But if this person gets sick, I can send that person and have no problem with the client not being serviced well.

Jeff: So, people are cross trained, is that ...?

Donna: Yes, as much as we can, including the partners.

Jeff: You said staff were involved earlier on, there was involvement. How were they involved?

Donna: They are involved in terms of we have strategy sessions, what we are going to do, how we are going to do it, what anticipate is expected, what to move on. They are involved in everything but the finances, cash flow statements, that sort of thing is the partners' issues. This is where we stand right now. This is what we have to do. I

am as honest with them as I possibly can be without the benefit of actually saying, Here's the statements". That's the partners' business.

Bob: Well, I hope they look at it the same way as I look at it. In this field, because we are in the medical field, it is a constant learning process. One day we might have to come up with a different system for a certain client, in our computer for billing, or ... some people liked to be billed different ways. So, again, you have to be constructive or creative to come up with different systems for them. So that's always a learning process. People call up to ask questions about different things. As far as I am concerned, that is a learning process. We are constantly dealing with the government for licenses and for insurances and for all kinds of different things. Everything that we do is a learning process I think.

It is clear that it is important for most employees in most of the participants' firms to learn. However, there appear to be some limits on the learning. For example, in at least two cases financial type issues would appear to be out of bounds for employees.

While these firms may not exactly fit the description of the learning organization detailed by Pedler, Boydell, and Burgoyne (1989) it was interesting to note that most owners/managers were prepared to tolerate some mistakes on the way to helping others in their organizations learn.

To further explore the notion of the learning culture owners/managers were asked how they would respond to an employee who has tried something new (e.g., a new method of displaying goods) and has failed.

Jack: ... then I would say this is what worked for me, try it. If it doesn't work, create it and change it to your personality. So, I would always make the first attempt to say this is what I did. It may or may not work for you, try it anyway. But, if you never try it, you will never know. So there is a big ego scenario thing attached to that. I think that this will work, but personality wise it may never work. So, I would not be upset if they would try my system and find that it failed. I would personally feel upset though ... And if they come away from that and take from me and expand upon it and put a different angle on it, then that's great. That happens a lot.

Linda: I would encourage them to keep trying to do more. I think that's great. I always love for people to do displays and stuff because the full-time person and I do most of them. It gets to be, you run out of ideas and stuff, oh that happens all the time.

Brian: Well, you've got to be careful not to discourage them in the future. So, what I would do is perhaps maybe offer some suggestions on how it could be improved, hoping that the employee would think, "Yeah, that's true, I didn't think of that, that would be good". And then let them make the improvements and involve them in the process, rather than say, "That's no good, tear it down", and do it myself. One thing I have learned, you want to keep them motivated and you want them to continue to think about how to improve things. Usually, those sorts of things aren't the type of thing that is going to cost you a lot of money, or anything like that. So why get worked up about it? You want to keep them thinking and encourage them to take the initiative to do that. So, for the most part, that's not a problem. But if it were to be a problem, I think work together on it and resolve it, and say, "I think maybe we could do that better that way, yeah, that would be

better", and then off they go to do it.

Tom: Well, we discuss it. Why did it fail? And how can we prevent that in the future? And if there is a particular easy reason that should have become overcome, then we make sure that we are all aware of that. I sent out a memo. I don't know if you ever saw it or not, about 99.9%, have you ever seen that? You should see that. It's about why 99.9% isn't good enough.

Donna: Providing the thinking ... was sound thinking was there, and usually we discuss these things because it is not just me, but the staff in general, because it affects everyone. Other people have other experiences that we can draw on. That is O.K. But they have to have given it 150%. If they failed because they didn't do it well, that's big trouble. If they fail, because it was something that we had to try, and we kept the client abreast, in other words, it wasn't being done in a vacuum, then that is O.K. It's not O.K., but not their fault.

Bob: One thing I do is, I have learned to delegate jobs to people. You have to do that, because one

person cannot run the whole show. But, one thing I learned is if you delegate a certain job to a person and they do a good job, really give them a good pat on the back and let them know they did a good job. What I am hoping that does is make them feel like they want to learn more about what they just did, or maybe exceed. Let's say work to higher levels in the business, and by doing that, you are going to have to learn how certain things work. So by being nice to them is one way of putting it, or by ...

Jeff: Showing some recognition.

Bob: Yes, exactly.

Owners/managers were not only tolerant of "good" mistakes but felt that they could in fact help their employees learn.

Susan: Just making sure that he's exposed to it on ...

Jeff: Just to learning?

Susan: Well, I'm talking about learning the attitude and when we get together I make sure that in addition to just expectations, I make sure that he is exposed to this. So I see it as my responsibility to expose him to it because otherwise where would he be? He'd have to go looking for it to pick it up and I don't want him to have to go looking for

it ... So, I exposed him to it by giving him copies of tapes and articles and the things, the way I treat him and what we do.

Linda: Well, we were talking about that already. The last time we had our staff meeting, we need ah, we have to keep updating all the time, we were going to have a product knowledge night sometime in the end of August and we haven't really done that before. But when we used to be smaller and there was fewer of us working more hours, so everybody knew the stock better. Now that you have more part timers and things like that, when you get the new stock in, it's good to review everybody on it right away so that we're familiar with it so I think we could sell it faster. I mean sometimes, and it happens to me too, the end of the season, I realize how nice something is. Gee, it's kind of late then to know. It's better to know how everything fits and looks and is priced a lot earlier. Then you can hopefully blow it out the door earlier.

Brian: Their tasks, their responsibilities are fairly simple. There is a limited number of things, a limited number of areas that they could be

improved upon. Sales seminars would always be helpful. But I find, as the younger people gain more experience, they gain more confidence and they need less supervision. They need less training. Again, recognizing that these are people who are in areas of study, maybe totally unrelated to business, and no aspirations to stay in the retail environment. There is probably not a necessity for them to get too much training. But smaller things, smaller areas, for example, there is a series of seminars, we did send some of our employees to those that were open to employees and so on, sales related.

Jeff: Were they beneficial?

Brian: I think so, I think so. If nothing else, those seminars always seem to serve to reinforce things they've already learned. So they may have gone and felt, "Yeah, I kind of feel, kind of knew that", but it is reinforcement and it just makes sure that they keep doing those same things. By recognizing the importance of it, maybe work to improve it for themselves, for their own benefit. We don't try to mold career employees, because of the nature of our business, being what it is. But we try to develop the individual moreso for their own personal development.

Jeff: More like self confidence, dealing with other people.

Brian: Exactly, and knowing some of the ins and outs of a business, and that has worked. You do get people asking why this?, and why that?, and what about that? And encouraging initiative. That's probably the most important thing. Sometimes, you have younger people who just totally lack initiative, and we try to ...

Jeff: Over time.

Brian: Over time. As they gain confidence, recognizing that they are green. But as they learn things, they learn things that are new to them. Some things they like, some things they don't like as much. But as they learn things about the business, about themselves, about other people, they gain confidence. And as they gain confidence, they'll gain initiative. So again, I think it's an evolutionary thing. It is not something that you say, "You, tomorrow, you got to have initiative, tomorrow I want you to do something on your own". That's hard to expect. "What are you talking about, what do you mean?". They would not know where to start. They don't know people. They don't know your business. They wouldn't know what might be expected of them.

Again, allowing time. I guess, I have a certain amount of patience, though. I allow them to develop on their own at their own speed.

Interestingly, the learning process for employees appears to be informal, very much rooted in on-the-job experiences, and highly interpersonal, involving a lot of contact between owner/manager and employee. The material to be learned does appear to be largely determined by the owner/manager and there are some exclusions in terms of what is to be learned (e.g., employees not always privy to certain financial issues). There is then some sense of fit with Figure 1 in terms of the development of the learning culture, it is not a perfect nor a complete fit.

Given that learning was important to these owners/managers and was actually taking place, the issues of barriers to learning, the fourth component of the model arose.

Barriers to management self development

To determine the extent and type of barriers to self development participants were asked the following question. Are there any things that prevent you from attaining your learning goals? Two participants felt there were no

barriers to their development,

Susan: No. It all rests with me.

Linda: No, no. I just have to decide what I want to do. If I want to take a course, I will just have to do it. But it is just a recent thought, that's all. If I decide to do it, I just will do it.

Others tended to focus on barriers to development caused by lack of time or money.

Diane: Yeah, time and money. What else is there right, to prevent you?

Jack: Well, the time being the major one, but financing, of course, basically economic I would say.

Brian: Time would probably be the biggest thing. I think it is important for any businessman, small business person, like ourselves to maintain a balance in our lifestyle, in other words, where we work 60 to 70, some times of the year, around Christmas, around 80 hours of the week, to balance that with recreational activity and certain things that keep us fit and healthy. But there is not always time to do everything, and so if we needed

to develop certain areas, in certain areas, I find time is the biggest problem. A couple of years ago, when we were on a series of seminars, and we really squeezed a lot. Everytime we had some free time, in the evening when we were not opened, we would go to these seminars for a several-month period. And that was a bit of a strain on us.

Tom: Other priorities, you know there is only so many hours in the day, and there is a lot of other things that you like to do.

Jeff: Just time.

Tom: Yeah, I guess learning, per se, learning in a structured manner is not a priority in my life.

Donna: Time.

Jeff: Time. How does that prevent you?

Donna: Because I don't have any.

Bob: At first it did, because we couldn't afford to do it, money was the main factor. ?????????? stop me from learning that things that I wanted to learn. I can't see anything that would stand in the way. I feel that I am bright enough to learn anything that I need to learn. The business is doing well, and I feel I can go for a day here, and a day

there, and not be here so much, and we can afford it.

The barriers faced by the participants seem to be far fewer in number than those discussed by Kaplan, Drath, and Kofodimos (1987) but in their own right these barriers, mainly time and money, are formidable. For the most part participants who identified barriers had some sense of how they could be overcome or managed.

Jeff: How do you feel you are dealing with these barriers? You mentioned time and money and they're somehow related as you just explained. How are you dealing with these? How are you overcoming these barriers?

Diane: Well, I thought the summer would be long and wonderful and I'm beginning to see already it's gonna come to a short end. There's not all this wonderful time I thought I had. Again time management, I attended a lecture recently by Winwood, is his last name, I think it was Stephen Winwood, I can't remember his first name, no his son's name is Stephen, John Winwood. A lecture given to the executive group, association of Halifax on time management. He was excellent,

like with the lists and ticking off things and telling yourself what's the personal payback on this. Often what happens is people have values, this is what I want, and then you look at what they spend most of their time doing, it's way over here. It's not even related to what's important in life. So he says you've got to get control of that, look at the things you do that have no relation to what's important to you and cut them out or do something to avoid doing those. So I've got to learn to say no, so that's how I'm coping with the time problem. Taking on only things that I feel are routed towards gaining my long-term goals.

Jack: Well, there would have to be a directional change.

Tom: I could make it more of a priority. Obviously, if it was more of a priority, I would do it. Yeah. I guess I don't like too much structure in my life. And that's how it would be.

Donna: The only opportunity that we have to learn about industry things is at conferences. And at conferences, I often do presenting myself, but not to say I don't learn, you always learn. You talk to people, what's happening with them, what's happening on the West Coast. Those are very

important, and from a staff point of view, we are always there at the hospital one, the university one, the local one. We have a presence at all three. So, industry-wise, whatever we can do in that, we do, and they are pockets of times, conferences, or whatever.

For at least one participant there was a sense that little could be done about the lack of time other than continue to work along.

Brian: Not directly because one thing about being in small business, and the textbooks will say this, if you are in business for yourself, be prepared to work long hours. So, you are almost resigned to the fact that that's going to be the way it has to be. Especially, at times when it is a little bit more difficult. If things are rolling right along, you can put somebody else in charge and expect them to continue to roll along, but we are having to spend as much time, even though our sales are not where they were, as much time at the business as I have had before, except I am doing other things. I am refocusing and doing other things. My hope would have been, as we get older and you continue to be in business, you can spend

less time at it, but I don't think that's reality.

To some extent then, there is a fit between the management self development of small business owners/managers and Figure 1. Issues such as lack of time and money do make it more difficult to engage in management self development.

In general, there is a sense that the small business owners/managers "fit" the model outlined in Figure 1. The individual is clearly the starting point and the focal point for them, however the planning aspect is quite loose and perhaps not as clearly articulated or formalized as some, for example, Hague (1974), might prefer. Evaluation of learning outcomes occurs at the individual level and to some extent at the organization level although these processes may not be as complete, formal or sufficient for some, in particular, Dalzell (1985) and Mumford (1983). Further, while owners/managers want their employees to develop there appear to be some limits on the areas and extent of this development (e.g., some employees are not privy to financial information) and the learning organization as described by Pedler, Boydell, and Burgoyne (1986) may not be as evident. Lastly, there appear to be some common barriers to management development for these owners/managers, some of which are being dealt with in a reasonable manner.

In short the model presented in Figure 1 has been a reasonable guide to management self development in small business but a number of issues that were not considered in this model have emerged. These issues include learning stance, accidental learning, impersonal versus interpersonal issues, and formal versus informal learning and are examined in more detail in the following chapter.

CHAPTER SIX

Emerging issues

Several themes begin to emerge from analysis of the interviews, including the individual's learning stance, learning as an accidental process, learning as an impersonal or interpersonal process (including the role of others in the learning process), and learning through formal and informal processes.

Learning stance

The individual's learning stance is the first key emergent issue and impacts to some extent on the emerging issues which follow. Learning stance can be described as the action posture an individual assumes with respect to learning and is an attitude which impacts on whether or not an individual is more or less likely to engage in learning. (It is different from learning style which focuses on how individuals process information). Miles and Snow (1984) identified a number of action postures that organizations take when making strategic decisions: the defender, the prospector, the analyzer, and the reactor. Postures of individuals with respect to learning, similar to the

postures outlined by Miles and Snow (1984) are readily discernible in the following transcripts. First is the defender who devotes primary attention to the significance of the environment to current operations, seeks few opportunities beyond existing product or service lines;

Linda: But, I've been watching the business for the last while, and I have been sort of juggling about different ideas of different approaches. I think we've found our niche and I think we are doing the right thing. I think if we hang on it will come through.

Next is the prospector who continually searches the environment for new product and market opportunities, experiments with new responses to emerging trends and creates change and uncertainty for competitors;

Diane: The only thing I'm concerned about is trying to keep up with the technology because in my field of computer training and training programs coming on stream and so on.

Jack: Constantly. You have to continue to read. You have to continue to do research ... So, in my business there are so many changes ...

Bob: But, I always think for the future. I am always setting new goals. Hopefully setting new goals. I am always setting goals, and once we hit them, then we have to set new ones. Really, I am thinking more about the future than I am about the past. You never go anywhere if you think about the past.

Next is the analyzer who splits attention to the environment by following routines in stable market areas, watching competitors, and following the leader in areas of environmental change and uncertainty;

Brian: We can change certain things internally, but the unfortunate thing is that the sporting goods industry is a constantly moving and changing animal, and there is only so much we can do. We can change, but we cannot change the industry. We have to move along with it.

Tom: I keep an eye out and listen to what my people had to say. When things make sense, you implement it.

Donna: It is trying to look down the road, trying to look at what's happening today, and I am scanning all the time. I don't change my mind quickly. I have to feel quite comfortable that the scan is reading

right. But, I am scanning all the time, all the time.

Last but not least is the reactor who takes action only when forced to respond to developments in the environment, waits for things to happen, sometimes to the point of being unable to respond quickly enough to achieve advantage;

Susan: I do know that in some cases that, you know, in some cases I didn't learn anything until my back was right up against the wall.

It seems there might be some relationship between learning stance and how proactive any individual might be with respect to learning. Several writers, for example, Argyris (1960) and Hague (1974) have suggested that self development is rooted in part in the individual taking responsibility for his/her own development. It seems likely that defenders and reactors are likely to be less proactive and likely to wait to be pushed into a situation where it is critical to change their way of doing things. Analyzers appear to be more willing to take responsibility for their own learning but may wait until the time is right (caution seems to be the rule of thumb in guiding learning here). Prospectors appear the most willing to take up the learning cudgel because to them it is a necessary and perhaps natural way of operating.

Is the starting point for management self development developing awareness of one's learning stance? Surely if one's strategy is to defend the current position or wait until forced to change (i.e., learn) then the self-initiated, self-directed aspects of management self development are clearly missing.

A number of issues ensue, how do we develop a learning stance? Can we hold more than one stance at a given point in time? Can we change our stance? If we can, how is it done and in response to what?

Growing out of the notion of a learning stance and the interviews is learning as an accidental process.

Learning as an accidental process

Underlying many of the approaches to management self development (for example, Argyris, 1960; Canning, 1984; Hague, 1974) is a notion of intentionality. That is the individual deliberately sets out to identify areas of management that require improvement and then deliberately sets out to obtain the improvements. A number of interviewees suggest that much learning (the fact that something needs to be learned, and/or the learning itself, and/or the application of things learned) occurs

accidentally, for example,

Susan: There were a lot of people coming and going over there, a lot of information being exchanged. It's a good spot if you can do it. You kind of drop by, put your feet up and have a chat with some people who are just kind of floating around and as a result of that you just kind of hear things. It's not because I've got any trade magazines that I'm pouring through on a regular basis or anything like that. It's much more osmotic, this is what happens to be going by and if I can pick something out of it ...

Tom: Well all of the learning I have done has been unstructured.

Jeff: Unstructured.

Tom: Yeah. So on that basis, I'm learning. Things you and I have talked about today I will think about. I'll get some new concepts, some new insights and ideas from them. Does that mean I am learning?

The above situations suggest the learning may be a result of indirect processes, for example, just sitting around and chatting and learning that you need to learn something or just simply learning something. In other cases the learning

process may be more direct, perhaps as a result of a question being asked. The process becomes intentional after the question is asked and there is no answer readily available and must be determined, for example,

Jack: Because when a question is posed and there are so many questions, it's nice to know the answer. The thing is that if you continue to research you will be able to answer the majority of questions and if you don't know the answer you can always get back.

Much of the reading or television watching that interviewees did was for enjoyment or for "keeping up" and there was no intention to learn anything specific. However, there are several instances where reading (e.g., books or trade journals) or watching television served as a rich source of accidental learning.

Linda: I get, like a retail directions and all the credit cards come out, like American Express has stuff and I have one by this guy, it's called "On the floor" by Harry Friedman, did you ever hear of him? Really good pointers and stuff. So I read those things. Those are always good, and there is only so much time.

Brian: Runners World magazine. That is about all. No, I shouldn't say that. We have some free publications that come in. There is a footwear journal, for example, that sometimes has articles of interest. There is a newsletter that comes periodically, just titled Retailing, I believe. Sometimes they have specific things in there to improve, areas of retailing, merchandising related, or it could be marketing related. It could be employee related. It could be related to better ways of dealing with security aspects. Things like that, little tips, that "Yeah, that's a good idea. I never thought of that", and we apply that. So that's handy.

Bob: No. Well, I should mention that the girl that lives with me is a nurse, and she gets the Nurses issue every couple of months. I go through that. We actually get some good ideas out of it. So I guess we do do that. It is called Nurses.

Jeff: Why do you watch those?

Jack: Keeping on top of trends, trying to get the scenario with which way the economy is going, which trends are coming demographically, what trends are coming basically ... So, the broader

information is, the better I find - pick up a lot of information from watching programs.

Obviously these media provide some sources of new information and learning but they may also serve to validate what owners/managers are currently doing.

Brian: Yeah, Venture. Venture is a good one. I usually try to pick up that one and W5.

Jeff: You watch those quite often, occasionally?

Brian: Yeah, Venture, I usually try to. Unless there's a ball game on, depending on who's playing, I might watch the ball game. But if there's a ... I flip over, and if there's a relevant story, I find Venture interesting.

Jeff: Why do you like that one? Why do you find it interesting?

Brian: Because I think it touches on real-life situations, and it focuses on innovative ideas. It seems more often than not things that you don't think real business situations, real problems, and I find when I'm watching that, that they have often had stories depicting situations that I can relate to directly. That we have faced it, maybe in our business. I see how they handle it. A lot of times there are similarities. So that's a good

one.

Jeff: Yeah. A real good learning tool.

Brian: Yeah. If nothing else, it can provide reassurances that the way we're handling things is a good way based on the experience of somebody else, and it might highlight problems that could arise in certain situations that maybe we would not have anticipated. Then you can see how they have handled it.

While some of what is learned appears to occur accidentally, the learning process for these interviewees was overwhelmingly interpersonal.

Interpersonal nature of learning

Participants were asked how they would address a particular problem or situation they faced and about which they knew little or nothing. What becomes clear quite quickly is that these owners/managers relied heavily on others in their personal and/or professional networks to obtain information, support or advice.

Susan: Not to a great degree. No. I'm not saying I don't discuss things with, for instance, my personal partner now, James, he's in business and

he sells and he knows what certain things are like, but you kind of discuss these things with people, but it's not really an attempt to find a solution, so to speak. It's more like this is what's on my mind, or this is what I had a problem with today or something like that. At the time the Venture Capital Company that I was associated with had, were sharing an office in their much larger group of offices there and there were people around that you could bounce things off a little, but it was never, there was nobody there in my business who could really offer anything. They weren't business owners in themselves, they were just employees. People to talk about things, there weren't really any solutions.

Diane: Probably through my contacts, I would immediately, if it was technically related and technological I would call someone at CIPPS.

Jack: If, in your mind, yourself, when you're analyzing a situation where you are out of your expertise, you have to be able to fall back on that situation and basically advise others to be able to handle that situation ... It's investigation, it's

research so I can advise those owners of investment properties what they are faced with or what alternatives they have, just extra information.

Linda: Well, I would just ask somebody.

Jeff: Ask somebody about it. O.K., whom might you ask?

Linda: I'm really, really lucky. I have a couple of people that I guess you would say sort of serve as mentors for me. My dad and my boyfriend, who is a successful business person, and so I would just call one of them.

Brian: First thing is we try to understand it. We don't panic. We try to see how we fit with that situation, and then get the overall perspective and sometimes, we just might decide well we will ride it out, if it's a competitive situation. Others, we might because we are smaller and we can react, we might attack it, head to head. For the most part, in a competitive situation, we feel that the fact that we are there on a pretty regular basis, is an important part of our relationship with our customers. They can always identify with a face and somebody, and that's important. So that solves a lot of problems,

actual problems with the competitive point, because you get to know our customers, and if we feel we're competitive. As long as that's the case we don't have a lot of problems from the competitive point of view. New suppliers, we make decisions on the basis of reputation. We may ask somebody's opinion, look at your product. We may determine, based on what we think of the level of the sales representation, what type of customers they might be selling to, and what competitive situation we might face as a result of that. Those kinds of things. So we do ask some questions beforehand.

Tom: Yes, whenever we go to develop a new product, we go into new product areas all the time. Well, first of all you try and figure out what's happened, and then you try and figure out what's been done in the past. Then you try and gauge who's involved in it and what they're like. And then you don't make a decision right away.

Jeff: O.K.

Tom: You wait for a while.

Jeff: You think about it for a while? O.K., what else do you do?

Tom: I don't know that's probably it. You want to

throw an example at me, a situation to me and then I can analyze it.

Jeff: What about the new product itself, who makes the final decision? Do you make it yourself, do you make it in consultation?

Tom: I'll make it in consultation with my customers. I'll make it in consultation with my staff. I'll make it in consultation with you. I'll make it in consultation with the guys I'm having a couple of beers with. I'll make it in consultation with the person I'm playing tennis with. It's pretty basic. Do you like this? What do you think of this? What's wrong with it? How much would you pay for it? What do you think of the colors? Do you think you would ever use it? Would you give it to somebody? So on and so forth.

Jeff: So a little ad hoc, a lot of help?

Tom: A lot of help from my friends. And if they're friends, they'll give you an honest answer. They won't say, "Oh yeah, you are going to make a million bucks on that."

Donna: You don't take on clients where we don't know what we are doing. If we don't know what we are doing, we don't take them. If it is an area that we need to expand on for a particular client because

of their need, what we do is just go find out. We don't ...

Jeff: Who do you find out from?

Donna: Often we have lots of materials here, and I have a network that I use. And they use me as well. If it is something that I haven't come across or I want to pass by someone, I have some good friends in the industry who I trust, who I usually tell.

Bob: Well, first of all, and I suppose it stems back to common sense. First of all what I try to do is sit down and talk to the office manager or the driver manager. We sit down and talk things over. Then I usually go home and throw it around in my head a million times. And so far, I have come up with the right answers. But if it is something that I am really, really not sure about, and I know that if there is going to be consequences if I come up with the wrong answer, either money-wise or lose a client or something like that, which probably if you lose a client, you are going to lose money anyway. Then I'll sit down and talk with these people and, again, we'll go through the same routine ... talk about it. And we usually end up coming up with the right answer, because he is going to give me legal answers. Because as

long as I know I am fine legally, I can usually come up with the right answers.

When participants were asked if there were any specific individuals with whom they discussed problems, some identified specific individuals such as accountants or lawyers, others made reference to a more general network, and one suggested he would discuss any business situation with anyone who would talk with him. The point really is that for owners/managers of small businesses, learning is a highly interpersonal venture often carried out through a more network of professional advisors, a more informal network of business associates, or a quite informal network of friends and others. A key to learning in small business may be the development of networks (formal and informal; business associates and friends).

Diane: I have an accountant who I rely on totally. She's excellent, small firm, and she certainly keeps me up to date on everything I need to know and that's the extent of that.

Brian: Yeah, we have a lawyer and I've got an accountant, he's not a chartered accountant, but he does our books for us on a monthly basis. We do discuss some financial aspects with our accountant, or I

do, mostly. Occasionally, there are things of a legal nature that come up that I can pick up the phone and we can discuss with the lawyer. We have a relationship with him.

Jeff: Anybody in the industry, or you know, somebody that has been around for a while? Or somebody you respect, or know or like you might be able to bounce ideas off?

Brian: Yeah, there is a number of sales reps who are fortunate enough to travel the Maritimes region who, many of whom are based in Halifax. Some have been around 5 or 6 years; some as many as 20 years. Yeah, we have a very good rapport with many of these sales reps. There's not too many that we have a bad rapport with, I'd say. So, yeah, they're always available to feel out in terms with what's going on in the market. Anytime, before we make a purchase decision, with that particular sales rep, we try to get a feel for how they're selling the product; how they see the market, and that can influence our buying decision, yes. We work with them.

Tom: No, I don't hesitate to discuss any particular

problem with any particular of any particular background, of any particular interest, if (a), I think it would be fun to discuss, (b), I think I could learn something, and (c), I think they could learn something.

Donna: Often we have lots of materials here, and I have a network that I use. And they use me as well. If it is something that I haven't come across or I want to pass by someone, I have some good friends in the industry who I trust, who I usually tell.

The interpersonal focus of the owners'/managers' personal learning carries through to the learning of their employees. When asked how their employees learned the things they had learned, it became clear that owners/managers were highly involved in their employees' learning in a very interpersonal way.

Susan: Well we have obviously spent a lot of time ... We spend a lot of time together learning product knowledge and we have close communication everyday on the phone.

Jack: Basically by spending my time to help them implement - to have a greater understanding of

what I do so that they can see how it all fits.

Tom: I guess basically, like I said, we run a loose organization and the only way in terms of learning is acquiring more information. And I've told them, "Look, the more they know, the more they are going to be of use to us". I have encouraged them to learn as much as possible about business, about how things work, about why things happen the way they do and what the best way of doing things is, the best alternatives, and better ways.

Jeff: So, how have you encouraged this?

Tom: Just through personal contact over the weeks, the months, the years that they have been there.

Jeff: Talking to them, saying, "Can you do it?". "Do you know of any way we can improve on this?".

Tom: Yeah, it would probably be useful for you to talk to employees of mine and ask them these sorts of questions, and see what they see.

Donna: By spending an awful lot of time with them. Because like I said there is no school. We don't get somebody with a degree in development here. O.K., we can't hire them. They are not there. They bring experience with them, but in order to move them forward, because we deal with such a

myriad of accounts. I mean, it is not like we deal with just a hospital, or just a university, we do certain things. The way that they have to learn is that I have to bring them along. Now, they have to have something when they come in here. I mean, I can't hire somebody off the street and expect them to ... I mean the training period would be too long. But, if I can bring a person who understands or has a basic background. I look for certain things. I look for someone who is going to work hard, who learns quickly, and who is very dedicated to client's servicing and understands that. I just spend an awful lot of time with them in the beginning is how it works. And even now, I still do, depending on ... there is certain things that I still have to do, because we don't have anyone who I am confident with at this point. Because it is not the client's problem, and it is not just sending them someone, it is sending them someone who knows. That is what they paid for. The training aspect in terms of the industry, has to be We can't back out.

Jeff: So, it is learning on the go, as you go.

Donna: As you go, that is right.

Jeff: How did they learn the skills and so on and the

knowledge necessary for the different areas?

Donna: I worked with them until I bring them upto snuff. Sometimes we cross train with a person who really knows it well, but they work with me. When I first brought them on, I was working with a lot more contracts, with them. I never sent a client someone who has not done it before. That's not what they pay me for. Even though they may have an understanding of it, this is not textbook. I want them to have experience working with it. So, it sometimes meant that we had to ... I would be working twice as much, but they are all reaching a level where they can cross over more easily than they could before.

Bob: I think a good way to help others in my business to learn is to again have an open line of communications. Because you are going to get from them. They are going to tell you what they would like you to know. They would like to know more about a certain way we do things. That is the type of learning. But the delegating, I think is a very important way of teaching people that work for you. If you delegate work, and they do a good job, they are going to want to learn. Another obvious way is just the everyday things that

happen and something comes up that day that is completely off the wall or a lot different than your normal procedure. And then we have to come up with a certain way to make that work within the business. I think that is a really good way of learning.

While much of what is learned by owners/managers and their employees is based on interpersonal processes, much of the learning also has an informal orientation.

Informal learning

In this context informal learning refers to learning events which occur sometimes spontaneously and often as a result of doing things on the job or just talking with or observing others. Informal learning may well be accidental or deliberate and interpersonal or impersonal. However, informal learning refers to learning which takes place outside the confines of organized, structured learning processes such as institutionally-based degree or certificate courses and programs (these organized and structured learning processes include the management self development groups touted by several writers, for example, Hague, 1974; Canning, 1984; and Pedler, 1988a). However, as seen by the following comments much of the learning of the

owners/managers occurred on an informal basis.

Jeff: Do you think about how you learn things? You talked earlier about learning all the time.

Brian: When there's time. Yeah, I do. Sometimes I reflection how well we're doing certain things and you always know there's room for improvement. When we do get some free time, such as now, in fact, it's an opportunity to be a little more critical and try to look for ways to make things better. As we get into peak selling seasons, the name of the game is you have to sell, you have to sell, the product is there, so you have to sell it, otherwise all the other things, the financial aspects don't work for you. The marketing isn't as important when you are in a peak selling season, because you've presumably done some of that marketing activity all along to get yourself to that selling season. Then you've got to be a salesman and keep things rolling. In between there, you're doing other things. You are looking back financially, how you did, and you're looking ahead to see how you might do. So, you're learning all the time. Those are some of the things you're learning. You're learning that you are not doing everything all the time, and you

can't be doing everything all the time.

Jeff: So it becomes a matter of learning a number of different roles and how to complete each role, where and when?

Brian: And where to exercise them and at what times. That comes from, I guess, learning more about one's business. The overall picture over a period of a year, a couple of years, you get to learn what your strengths are what your weaknesses are. But you're always picking up skills out of force of necessity, and it's only maybe afterwards that we look back and say, "Gee, yeah, I learned something today", and it's hard to pinpoint specific examples, but we're always learning things, a continual process.

Jeff: How do you best learn do you think?

Brian: How do we best learn?

Jeff: You talked about university, you talked about going to seminars and you talked about actually doing things.

Brian: I think you can't beat experience. You learn by doing. You learn about yourself, on the job, you learn about your customers by dealing with them. You learn from your business by being around it everyday, and from talking to people who sell to us, our sales representatives, and so on, who see

a broader picture than we do. Mostly you learn by talking to other people and through that, out of that, comes a lot of things maybe, you didn't know about yourself. So that's as important as anything. The education helps to instill certain principles, but you don't really learn it until you have a chance to apply them. You can't beat experience.

Some obviously had been engaged in and are still engaged in more formal learning processes and there was some utility in them.

Brian: Yeah, there is always some good to pull out of these different things. Some topics I didn't need. I found out that I didn't need to improve on because, for example, the speaker on financial aspects of business, I knew the theory. I knew a lot of that. I practice a lot of those things. So, that was not as beneficial. But for example, the guy who did a one or two hour seminar on advertising was really interesting and had some good ideas. Some things that I hadn't thought of, so we would try to use that.

Jeff: You've tried them and they were successful? The experience was successful?

Brian: Yeah, or they made a lot of sense, "Yeah, that's true, he's right". So now I try to use some of that experience and area of expertise. But time is the biggest thing. If I felt I could spend time on different seminars that come up, as they come up, I would possibly do it, if I thought it would be of value, but there is not always the time. If a seminar comes up in the middle of August or end of August or early September, and you know it's back-to-school, you need all the staff you can get, I can't go to that, so.

Diane: For instance this summer I'm going to take a course at TUNS in expert systems.

Reading is a good example of informal learning. Other people (other than authors) are not required for the process to unfold and it can be targeted specifically to the owners'/managers' personal needs and his/her personal schedule.

Susan: I have readings that I read. I have tapes that I do.

Jack: Most of my research at night is reading. That's the best best thing, reading financial planning

books, reading cases on real estate. Reading the Globe and Mail, reading how the stock market is doing, reading how mutual funds are doing, reading what term rates are, reading everything, basically reading.

For others learning was simply a process of making sense of experiences.

Tom: Well all of the learning I have done has been unstructured.

Jeff: Unstructured.

Tom: Yeah. So on that basis, I'm learning. Things you and I have talked about today I will think about. I'll get some new concepts, some new insights and ideas from them. Does that mean I am learning?

The role of informal learning was echoed in responses to the question, what could be done to help you improve your learning?

One felt there was nothing that could be done to help her.

Susan: No, I can't think of anything.

Another felt that creating more focus would help her learn.

Diane: Yeah, yeah. That's hard to say because I really haven't had a problem with it. I'm interested in so many things. I'll read something like this article I cut out of the the Globe and Mail, I'll read something and I'll say, "This is what I want to get into." Right now I'd love to get involved in research on about 4 or 5 different topics. Now to me research is learning. I mean, by the time you do your literature search and so on you've picked up a lot of information. There's a lot out there. It's a matter of, I guess what I'm trying to do is focus more and that would be my biggest drawback to learning, is the focus. I do a little bit of everything because I'm interested in a lot. And I'm still waiting for it all to gel. I know it's going to come into a meaningful package somewhere, but I'm not sure, it just hasn't yet.

Jeff: So if you could just create a little more focus?

Diane: Yeah, that would make the biggest difference, if I could just focus a little more and see, I'm interested in for instance, I'm really interested in electronic mail and how it affects the way people manage. you know, because it's really changed the office environment, changed the complete communication structure in an office. So that's of interest. I'm really interested in

telecommunicating, the telecommuting, this idea that people can work at home. And how do you trust that your employee is working, when he's working at home? You know, so that sort of thing. So that's another area I'm interested in. I'm really interested in expert systems. I think it's the answer to computers. If we could somehow store all the knowledge that people have, in a computer system, in such a way that I don't need to talk to an expert. I could just punch a few keys and get the answers out to help me make a decision. Most people make poor decisions because they just don't have the information available and it should all be easily available in computers now. So, I'm interested in that area. I don't know where the commonality is between those three areas. There's nothing particularly common, but they're all areas I could explore. What I'm hoping is something will click and say this is the way to go and then I'll focus on going in that direction. But again those aren't directly related to my business either. It's just part of that I'll be able to offer a better service. I was very much involved in electronic-mail training, computer-user training. I've set up computer-user programs for one of the local banks,

where we rented a hotel room and we brought computers in and we just put all their senior managers through. Electronic mail, again we tried to, this one company, two companies I worked with on electronic-mail training, and at one was extremely successful and the other one, it was a complete failure. And the difference was, not the training, the difference was the support from senior management for it. So I'm beginning to see what makes training effective and one of them is complete support and commitment from senior management. You can't just send people on a training course. Anyhow, we're off track.

Others felt that a lack of time was the major impediment to more learning.

Jack: Well, of course, to be able to use more time. That I cannot see in my immediate situation.

Linda: Just better management of time, I guess, and discipline. That's all it takes, I think.

Brian: Right, right. I don't know, because so much of that, as we just said, would depend on the availability of ourselves and having more time to spend on areas that maybe need improvement. The

priority now is staying alive and righting ourselves for when the economy improves and that is where 90% of the focus is right now. I think that would be more easily answered once we get back to where we should be, and that may be 6 months from now, or 8 months from now. When we can look ahead, and say, "Here is where we have to go", and we can do some planning knowing that certain things, on a broader scale, are looked after, our internal house is in order, and to move ahead, here is the direction we want to take. In order to get there, we have to evaluate some of the things we have to do between now and then.

Interestingly nobody mentioned taking a course or having a special course offered to address their learning needs. However, two participants raised an interesting issue, that of informal help and guidance from some experts, practitioners and or academics.

Tom: I think it would be very useful for the university and for the business community if you were to have little seminars, with someone like you chairing and you have 5 or 6 people like me together. And you organized it so that the information would be going crosswise. And that wouldn't even be you.

That could be a student. Or the students could be there watching that. Just see the exchange of information there. And not extended periods of time, a period of an hour, or something like that ... So anyway, getting back to that, I like the idea of a little seminar thing. Say for example, if I had a problem and came to you and said, "This is a problem and I haven't got it figured out", and you call and get 3 or 4 other guys that, based on your data bank, have the same kind of approach to things that I do. I think that would be helpful. Well, I probably could call 4 or 5 or 6 guys in, but I wouldn't want to moderate them. But if it wasn't my problem, if it was somebody else's problem, I could probably do it. Yeah, I wouldn't feel confident in that, because I don't have any real background, moderating or chairing.

Donna: Sometimes I think that it would make far more sense if there was some sort of guided process of individual training. Not everybody can go to school. I can't. Not that I would not be willing to pay for that sort of thing, somebody come in and spend a day here. But, even, a lot of the business consultants currently, they don't have seminars. O.K., I want to know everything about

financial statements, and I want to know everything about this, or how do you manage growth, what signs do you look for, and I want to go away, take our situation, here is our books, O.K.? Now, I want you to come back and I want you to not only enlighten me, but I want you to guide me. But even CA's don't seem to do that. They might do it, but it is not the sort of individual ... they will come in and sit with you and they talk to you about what is going on in your business and stuff, but there is nothing that is more formalized. And it is very expensive. I want a CA to sit here for all day, it is going to cost me \$2,000, you know. If I wanted him to go away and prepare something and talk to me all day, it is going learning.

What underlies these last two comments is the use of informal learning to address specific concerns of the learner, at a time and place that is convenient to the learner, without creating unnecessary structure.

The issues that have emerged in the interviews and discussed in this chapter have to a great extent been overlooked or undervalued by those involved in management self development research. Small business itself has been generally

overlooked, however, few management self development writers (if any) consider the notion of learning stance. Further, the overriding concern with much management self development literature is the notion of management self development groups (i.e., those engaged in more deliberate and formal types of learning) in medium and large-sized organizations. This chapter has suggested that accidental, informal learning are key elements of management self development in small business. The concluding chapter, which follows, addresses some of the shortcomings of Figure 1 as it relates to management self development in small business.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Concluding comments

This chapter discusses management self development among small business owners/managers, suggests some changes and improvements to the model of management self development portrayed by Figure 1 (reproduced below), discusses educational and practical implications of the thesis, identifies some limitations to the current research, and lastly considers some directions for future research.

Management self development in small business

There is no doubt that management self development in small business has some similarities with its counterpart in medium and large-size organizations (as seen in Figure 1 below). For example, it starts with an awareness on the part of the individual of his/her strengths and/or weaknesses. The process of determining this awareness is very similar in all sizes of organizations, for example, it can be crisis driven, a result of introspection or the result of feedback. Learning goals are established and action taken to obtain these goals and there is some type of evaluation of learning outcomes. In addition,

owners/managers are concerned about the learning of employees and try to help this process (an approximation of the learning company) and these same owners/managers face barriers to their own learning which they do try to overcome.

Figure 1

A basic model for exploring management self development

THE INDIVIDUAL -----> DEVELOPMENT PLAN -----> OUTCOMES

BARRIERS TO DEVELOPMENT

However, any model of management self development (in small or large business) should likely take into account the individual's learning stance (how likely is this person to seek out new learning goals?), and the starting point should become the individual's learning stance. If the individual is more reactive and sees no need to learn then there will be little or no move towards development. If the individual is more proactive then that person is more likely to engage in learning on an ongoing basis. The findings in this

thesis suggest at least four learning stances which may differentially impact on the perceived need to learn.

It is also clear that some aspects of the model depicted in Figure 1 based on medium and large-sized organizations are not totally appropriate for small business owners/managers (despite some of the similarities mentioned above). That is not to suggest that small business owners/managers do not engage in management self development. On the contrary the participants in this study could well be described as doing such. The process outlined in Figure 1 tends to be facilitator driven, relies on groups of practitioners to meet on a regular basis, and requires some formalized plan that must be formulated, followed, and perhaps adjusted as learning goals are acquired or changed. It appears that this is (or should be according to the model) a very orderly, smooth, circular, and ongoing process. Life is not that simple for the owners/managers of small business and neither is their learning.

Owners/managers are likely to engage in learning that is informal, unstructured and that which relies heavily on interpersonal interaction with clients, customers, partners, and other business and personal associates. Further, this process is one that is likely to unfold in "fits and starts". Much of the knowledge about needing to learn may

occur by accident (although it may occur as in the big-business model by the individual facing a crisis or getting feedback). However, once the small business owner/manager sees a need for learning, the process that unfolds is quite different from the formal, structured approach shown in Figure 1.

Typically the learning is carried out through interpersonal interactions (again similar to the big-business model), albeit interpersonal interactions that are rooted in more personal sources than those found in the big-business setting. Further, the learning process is one that is unstructured, informal (no formal group meetings lead by facilitators over several months), and very much focused on the problem/situation at hand. The interpersonal interactions are based on networks of friends and associates from business, professional and social areas of the learners life. These interactions lack the contrived interpersonal nature of the formalized management self development group.

Once the learning episode is completed the owner/manager tends to "carry on" and does not ordinarily engage in reflection of that particular event (although the findings do suggest that they do reflect, but it tends to be a more broad range, long range reflection, not usually on specific learning events as suggested within Figure 1).

Lastly, management self development tends to be more of a staccato type of process, not the smooth and orderly circular process suggested by the large-sized model. This is likely due in part to the size of the organization. Small businesses tend to have few managers, few management levels, and lack the time and money resources of larger firms. As a result owners/managers are often engaged in a fast-paced variety of activities where attention is often changing to meet various demands and constraints. An owner/manager may attend to learning issues but be forced to focus on other issues (e.g., a dissatisfied customer) often because there is nobody else to complete them. The learning issue may be resumed after the crisis is over, or there may be another more pressing issue which puts the learning on the back burner. As a result of the often frenetic pace, variety and crisis-oriented nature of a small business owner's/manager's day the learning process becomes one that is stop and start.

The model in Figure 1 represents not only the "ought" but to some extent the "is" of management self development in medium and large-sized businesses. This thesis has to some extent presented the "is" of management self development in the small business sector. It is possible that management self development as described by Figure 1 (more facilitator driven and more structured) "ought" to be used in the small

business sector.

Educational/learning implications

A number of educational implications ensue from this thesis. Programs and courses of study tend to be disfavored by small business owners/managers and any group or institution offering help to small business owners/managers has to acknowledge this. If such courses and programs are offered, individual issues (e.g., learning needs) must be considered and programs and courses of study have to be broad enough and flexible enough to address the individual's requirements. It makes little sense (at least from the perspective of the owner/manager) to develop a marketing course that requires all participants to cover target markets, pricing, channels of distribution, and advertising, if the participant only needs to learn about target marketing. Given the accidental, informal, and interpersonal nature of much of the learning in small business it may be more appropriate for institutions to provide more specific, individualized assistance to owners/managers. For example, helping them to initiate, develop, and maintain a personal/professional network may be more beneficial than the design and delivery of broad-based content courses (for example, the marketing course mentioned above). Alternatively, the example cited by one participant

of a group of owners/managers coming together to discuss problems and solutions, with the "teacher" serving as moderator and resource person rather than as a lecturer, may be an opportunity for educational institutions to be of service and forge stronger links with the business community.

Implications for small business owners/managers

This thesis has several implications for owners/managers of small businesses. First, they should understand the individual aspect of management self development, that is, in terms of managerial skill, attitude, and knowledge every owner/manager will have different experiences, different strengths and weaknesses, and different focal points in terms of management development. Second, owners/managers will differ in their learning stances, and they should become aware of which stance is theirs, which stances are available, and which stance may be more appropriate under which conditions. Third, the learning process for owners/managers is overwhelmingly interpersonal and tends to be rooted in other people. Owners/managers would do well to increase the size and variety of their personal and professional networks to facilitate their own learning.

Limitations of this thesis

This thesis has focused on a small and relatively isolated though diverse small-business population, most of whom had some post-secondary education. This sample may not be representative of the broader, Canadian small-business population and generalizations beyond this small group (not necessarily a goal of this thesis) may not be appropriate. More importantly this thesis is not free of my own perceptions or any biases or interpretations rooted in those perceptions.

Future directions for research

It would be appropriate to explore in more detail particular learning episodes of owners/managers. In particular the notion of learning stance appears worthy of further examination. In-depth interviews that more sharply focused on learning stance, how it develops and what impact it has on learning would be a good starting point. Other questions could also be explored, for example, do individuals adopt several stances? If so, how? Under what conditions? Given the overwhelmingly interpersonal nature of the learning process for owners/managers (which is not surprising) it would also be appropriate to examine how personal and professional networks are set up, enhanced, and maintained.

APPENDIX A
SMALL BUSINESS INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. What is your present position?

Owner _____ Owner/manager _____

Manager _____ Other (please specify) _____.

2. In which industry group does your firm operate?

Manufacturing _____ Retail store _____

Wholesale _____ Construction _____

Transportation _____ Forestry _____

Mining _____ Real estate/Insurance _____

Hospitality/Restaurant _____

Business and personal services _____

Other (specify) _____

3. At this point in time, how many employees does your firm employ?

Please specify number _____.

4. Of the number above in question 2 please specify how many are full-time (working on average 35 hours or more per week) and how many are part-time employees (working on average less than 35 hours per week).

Number full time _____ Number part time _____

5. Interviewee's gender

Male _____ Female _____

6. How many years has your present business been in operation?

Please specify number of years _____.

SELF DEVELOPMENT ISSUES
INTERVIEW GUIDE

7. Why did you choose to go into business for yourself?

8. Why this type of business in particular?

9. Which business and management skills do you feel are the key ones for you for success in your firm?

10. How did you learn the business and management skills you currently possess? Do you think about how you learn? How do you best learn things?

If on the job, please provide an example:

11. Given various changes in the environment (e.g., free trade) or new problems (e.g., tougher economic climate) that you face as a businessperson, do you feel you need to acquire or further develop any skills, knowledge or understanding?

Yes _____ No _____

Please give an example

12. How were the above needs determined? Self assessment?

13. In your business, if you face a particular problem or situation about which you know little or nothing, how do you address it?

14. When the situation is over or the problem has been corrected, do you think about what happened or do you move on?

What do you think about?

15. Do you have a plan in place to address the learning needs identified above?

If no, why not?

If yes, please describe your plan

16. Do you belong to any group or organization that meets to discuss business problems and/or issues of common interest? Is there any individual (e.g., accountant, lawyer) with whom you discuss problems or concerns?

Yes _____

No _____

If the answer is yes to question 19, please describe the group and its process. Do you attend the meetings?

17. Do you currently subscribe to any business or industry publications?

Yes _____ No _____

If yes, which one(s)? Why?

18. Do you watch business or industry-related television programs?

Quite often _____

Occasionally _____

Never _____

Which ones? Why?

19. There are many books available on how to succeed in small business. Have you ever read a book of this type?

Yes _____

No _____

If yes, which one(s)? Why?

20. How will you know if you have achieved your learning goals?

21. How important is it for employees in your firm to develop new skills?

If important, how do you encourage them to learn? Projects?
Working in groups? Rotating through various departments?
Paying for courses? Providing time off to attend courses?

22. How would you respond to an employee who has tried something new (e.g., a new method of displaying goods) and has failed?

23. Are there any things that prevent you from attaining your learning goals?

24. Are you trying to overcome these barriers? How?

25. What could be done to help you improve your learning?

26. How can you help others in your firm learn?

DEMOGRAPHIC/BUSINESS SURVEY

PLEASE PLACE AN "X" BESIDE THE APPROPRIATE ANSWER UNLESS OTHERWISE SPECIFIED

1. Including your present position, how many years of full-time work experience do you have?

Please specify number of years _____.

2. How many years of full-time work experience do you have in your present position?

Please specify number of years _____.

3. Please indicate your age range:

Less than 30 years _____ between 30 and 40 years _____

over 40 - but less than 50 years _____

between 50 and 60 years _____

over 60 years _____

4. Please indicate your level of education:

less than high school _____

some high school or technical school _____

high school or technical school graduate _____

some university or community college _____

university or community college graduate _____

If you are a university graduate please specify your degree(s)

_____.

If you hold a technical or professional designation(s) please specify

_____.

5. What is the range of your firm's sales/revenues in an average year?

less than \$99,000 _____ \$100,000 - \$499,999 _____
 \$500,000 - 1,999,999 _____ \$2,000,000 or above _____

6. On the following 5-point scale, how do the sales/revenues of your present business compare to similar-sized firms in your industry? Please circle the number which corresponds to your choice.

	Above Excellent Average	Average	Below Average	Poor
5	4	3	2	1

7. On average, how do the profits of your present firm compare to similar-sized firms in your industry? Please circle the number which corresponds to your choice.

	Above Excellent Average	Average	Below Average	Poor
5	4	3	2	1

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