

SECTION 3

- TUTOR: Well, you've both been looking at different styles of managing individuals in companies and the workplace. How's the research going, Philip?
- PHILIP: Well, I've been looking at why individualism, I mean individual differences, are such an important area of management studies. When you think about any organization, be it a family business or a multinational company, they are all fundamentally a group of people working together. But it's what these individuals contribute to their places of work that makes you realize how important they are. Of course they bring different ideas, but it's also their attitudes and their experiences of learning. Diversity is important in these areas too. Q21
- TUTOR: So why do people behave so differently from one another at work?
- PHILIP: There are lots of reasons but research has shown a lot of it comes down to personality. And the other factor is gender. It's a well known fact that men and women do lots of things in different ways, and the workplace is no different. Q22
- TUTOR: Did you look at the effects of this variation on companies?
- PHILIP: Yes, I did. On the positive side, exposure to such diversity helps encourage creativity which is generally an asset to a company. But unfortunately individual differences are also the root of conflict between staff and they can lead to difficulties for management, which can sometimes be serious. Q23
- TUTOR: Thanks, Philip. So now I guess the two main things to remember here are to identify individual talent and then to utilize it. So Janice, *you* were looking at identifying different talents in workers. Do you think this is easy for managers to do?
- JANICE: Well, currently teamwork is in fashion in the workplace and in my opinion the importance of the individual is generally neglected. What managers should be targeting is those employees who can take the lead in a situation and are not afraid to accept the idea of responsibility. Q24
- TUTOR: That's true Janice but unfortunately many managers think the entire notion of encouraging individuality amongst their staff is far too hard.

- JANICE: Yes, that may be true but I think one of the most important tasks of managers is to consider the needs of the individual on one hand and group co-operation and conformity on the other. It requires creative thinking on the part of management to avoid tension. Q25
- TUTOR: So Janice, what kind of people do you think companies should be looking for?
- JANICE: Well, it has to start from the very beginning when companies are looking for new employees. When the personnel department is choosing between applicants they need to look for someone who's broken the mould and can think for themselves. Instead, people making these decisions often use a range of psychological tests to see if a person is a problem solver, or will do as they're told. I'm not convinced these qualities are actually the most important. Q26
- TUTOR: So do you think being a good team player is overrated?
- JANICE: No, it's not overrated. You do need to learn the rules and learn them fast. No individual can get around this if you're working in an organization.
- TUTOR: So how should managers deal with this?
- JANICE: Rewards. When an individual demonstrates the behaviour the organisation expects, some kind of incentive can be given. What's important here is that this happens right at the beginning so new recruits learn the rules of the system immediately. Also the incentive should be something the individual actually wants, and this isn't always just money. Q27
- TUTOR: To come back to you, Philip. You were saying that recognition of good performers is essential. What else should managers be looking for?
- PHILIP: Well, managing people means you not only have an understanding of your employees, but you also recognise the culture of the organization. In fact, for some organizations creativity and individuality may be the last thing they want to see during working hours! Q28
- TUTOR: Very true.
- PHILIP: Yes, but managing people isn't as easy as it looks. For example, change in the workplace can be quite tricky, especially if there's a need to increase profit. And at times like these managers may have to give priority to profit rather than individual staff needs. Q29
- TUTOR: Yes, and that creates difficult situations for people.
- PHILIP: Yes but what's important is that managers are able to deal with quite high levels of personal stress. During times of change they should be thinking not only about the strain on their staff but take time out to think of themselves. Q30
- TUTOR: Absolutely. So what are the implications of that for. . .