



# Discovering the foundational philosophies, practices, and influences of modern management theory

Modern  
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145

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The aim of this paper is to discuss the factors that influenced the establishment of modern management into the pervasive force it is today. It briefly describes modern management and discusses the reasons for this gap in knowledge in such a critical area. The main analysis of the paper focuses on the following social ideas and influences that created the conditions for modern management to be formed and established: social Darwinism and religion, the rise of social science, the promise of the scientific method, and the perspectives of the business tycoons.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This paper analyzes the prevailing trends of the late 1800s to determine which had the greatest influence on the formation of modern management.

**Findings** – This paper concludes that the greatest factors on the establishment of modern management were social Darwinism and the promise of the scientific method. These, then, provided the perfect environment for Frederick W. Taylor to become the embodiment and popularizer of modern management. Perhaps, surprisingly, Christianity had little influence.

**Originality/value** – Now that the prevailing influences of modern management have been surfaced, scholars and practitioners can more effectively critique the current state of management and determine whether legacy assumptions and influences are still valid, or whether modern management should change in some way(s) to better reflect accurate assumptions and influences operative today. The anonymous reviewers of this paper have found this analysis to be provocative and challenging. They have also concluded that a single article cannot do justice to such an important, yet relatively unexplored area. Consequently, the authors hope that other researchers will also be provoked to join in this important task.

**Keywords** Religion, Science, Management history, Christianity, Scientific management, Social Darwinism

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

Modern American management practices have become widespread in organizations not only in the developed world, but increasingly in urbanized third world business centers. Surprisingly, no one has explicitly documented how the foundation for these ubiquitous practices was formed. One might well question the omission of such research considering the meticulousness of the academic mindset. Bedeian (1998) notes that the management discipline has ignored its own history which would better illuminate the present. Even though Bedeian wrote this over a decade ago, a review of

