

Attitudes—Spark Plugs of Production

by

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(Summary of a speech given at the January 15, 1951, meeting of the National Association of Training Directors, New York City.)

Let us liken the essential factors in the industrial process to the three sides of an equilateral triangle. On side will represent products, the other side will be labeled profits; and the base—persons. Here is a symmetrical, geometric figure symbolic of the strength and harmony which can be in an industrial enterprise when PRODUCTS, PROFITS and PERSONS are kept in balance.

The equilateral triangle, with equal sides and equal angles between the sides, is also symbolic of the interdependence of the products, profits, and persons. We are beginning to see that these three are so dependent upon each other that modern business succeeds or fails not alone on the quality of its product or the strength of its financial base, but also on the character of its human-relations practices.

Although management has not always recognized the need of keeping products, profits, and persons in balance, there is abundant evidence that managers now realize nothing is more important. We are a people who have developed with distinction the technical applications of the lush natural resources which our continent has provided.

Building the financial foundation and the organizational structure of American business is an epic story. The skill with

which our industrial pioneers developed the manufacturing process and integrated the complex flow of production is an expression of human ingenuity unparalleled in history. The American genius for invention and technical application which has matured into organized research and systematic engineering development without stifling individual initiative is a tribute to human creativity and assurance for the future.

Now, at a time when pure science is getting greater attention than ever before; at a time when technical application of science is being exploited to the utmost; at a time when capital investment, national productivity, and individual income for all people in the United States are at their peak—in such a time as this, industrial leaders are proclaiming that the social responsibility of the corporation and individual human relations are the frontier areas.

Fortune Magazine declared: "The many corporate managers who so solemnly chose 'service' for their motto are not really trying to fool anybody. They are groping, if only subconsciously, for a new social principle by which their power may be made legitimate."

Mr. Eugene Holman, at the 125th anniversary of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, makes this concept specific:

"However, important as physical productivity is, it cannot, by any means, be considered the sum total of responsibility. Corporations are not merely aggregations of materials and machines. More importantly, they are people. In Jersey Standard we regard our employees as the company's most valuable asset. A particular oil field may become exhausted, a plant may be destroyed or lost by accident or war; but, as long as the company has people—loyal, experienced, and working together as an effective team—new oil fields can be found, new plants built."

These and scores of others like them are testimony to the principle laid down earlier by Mr. Thomas J. Watson: "To build a business, you must first build men."

And now abideth PRODUCTS, PROFITS, and PERSONS—these three. Modern business management is concerned with keeping these in balance. The "human side of supervision" is concerned with nurture, guidance, teaching, conservation, and productivity of persons. The face-to-face supervisor has the critical role in keeping the human side of our triangle balanced with the productive and the financial.

Let us observe this relationship with respect to two major problems of current interest.

First Problem

The first of these is found in the field of communications. In the rapid growth of industry, we lost many of the face-to-face contacts and understandings which once conditioned the relations of

men and managers in small businesses and handicraft shops. There was a time when the owner and manager of a business knew of, and participated, in the joyous and sorrowful occasions of his workers' families—when the children were born, when illness struck, when the mortgage was burned, and when the anniversaries came around. In turn, they knew and shared in the ups and downs of the business, sacrificed willingly, and participated vigorously.

As the growth of industry increased the size of operating units, the divisions of supervision increased—and the distance from management to men became as great as from East to West; in some cases: "Never the twain could meet." Under these circumstances, the physical problems of communication became difficult, and the emotional problems impossible.

At the same time that growth and expansion were eliminating primary face-to-face relations between manager and man, the emphasis upon technological processes was claiming a larger proportion of management attention. Whereas the manager of a small shop gave his time to supervising skilled craftsmen who knew the technological process, the manager in a modern shop is concerned with care and setup of intricate, multiple-operation machinery and control processes—often to the detriment of his personal relations in his department.

In this situation, communication was too often left to impersonal house organs, bulletin boards, and the chance gossip of the shop.

The ill effects of this loss of personal communication are being recognized.

Many of the dislocations in labor relations ordinarily charged to bad intent and unfair practices are due to nothing but inadequate communication between parties to the dispute.

To Meet the Situation

To meet this situation, many expedients have been taken. The profession of personnel management has developed in order to record, understand, adjust, and harmonize the human resources of the shop and the technical requirements of production. The field of industrial relations has grown up in answer to the need for professional attention to the interests of human relations.

Technics of collective bargaining, mediation, and arbitration are some of the new specialties in industrial communications. Necessary and desirable as these external approaches are, effective communication can be had only through intrinsic methods. The face-to-face supervisor must become the primary instrument of communication. He must be established as a responsible executive—a part of management—with the full confidence of top management and the respect of workers.

This requires management relations which bring to the foreman-supervisor full understandings of company policies and practices. Economic and financial data available to company officers must also be given to all supervisors. This material must, in turn, be interpreted to workers. Supervisors should be trained to understand the basic economics of industry and to teach its principles informally in the framework of

the productive process. Information should, therefore, be made available in the daily relations of the shop. The cards must be "on the table—face up." Such confidence-building frankness in communications will produce in supervisors and workers alike a feeling of responsibility and a sense of belonging to the business.

There are certain complementary adjustments desirable to the program of making supervisors responsible members of management and adequate channels of communication. Reducing the size of departments to the number of workers one foreman can know personally, thus eliminating the necessity of key men and assistant foremen, is primary in this program. Workmen who are subject to the supervision of several bosses—each covering a special feature of one man's work, such as setup, operation, inspection—cannot have a unified view of management; nor can management have a single, confident, all-around understanding of each worker. No personnel records, objective tests, rating scales—desirable as these are—can take the place of the continuing personal relations of men with managers who are trained and competent in the human side of supervision. Indeed, objective instruments and professional services reach their highest effectiveness in the hands of the primary supervisor who uses them to assist him in his personal relations.

Another approach to the problem of improving communications—and thus keeping the triangle in balance—is found in the tendency to reduce the echelons of supervision between the head of the factory and the workers. The pyramid

structure of much industrial organization, which met the supervision needs of expansion by introducing more intermediate stages of managers between the top and bottom of the ladder, complicated the process of communication and increased the probability of misunderstanding as interpretations passed up and down the "line."

The current trend toward decentralization is one of the partial answers to this problem. Although there is no inherent evil in bigness, there are particular technics in management which retain the values of small operations in large organizations. Developing face-to-face supervisors into competent managers of all phases of management produces, in effect, a decentralization of the shop, a sense of proprietorship in the supervisor, and a sense of belonging to a tangible group on the part of the worker.

From whatever side we approach the problem of improving communications in modern industrial organization, we discover that the primary face-to-face supervisor is a critical person in the process. It is his job to personalize management.

And now abide **PRODUCTS**, **PROFITS**, and **PERSONS**—as long as they are kept in balance.

Second Problem

The second major problem claiming the attention of the human side of supervision is the need to develop **JOB SATISFACTION**. A movement in American industrial history, which has

been hailed with messianic fervor is, "job simplification." Although job simplification—with its application of scientific methods to human effort—has raised our productive efficiency and bestowed its benefits on shareholder, laborer, and the consumer without favor, we have misused it. Not only have we simplified the motions and reduced the human energy expended per unit of work performed, but we have also reduced the scope of the job by an extreme subdivision of labor.

Simplification of job methods was not intended to foster job reduction, but it usually has. On the theory that the more limited and simple the worker's activity the more efficient he would be, engineers reduced the scope of the job while simplifying the operation. This may be good engineering, but it is questionable human relations. This trend ran counter to the general trend of education and citizenship.

While industry tended to make the worker's job more and more limited, education, travel, radio, television, movies, and other institutions were tending to broaden his interests and increase the range of satisfactions. For hundreds of thousands of working people, we were increasing the regimentation and monotony of the job while society in general was raising them above the level of their work. The consequence in industry is a decline in craftsmanship, a lowering of the sense of achievement, and the loss of the feeling of belonging. Only a full application of "the human side of supervision" can reverse this trend.

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injuries in case of accidents, not to prevent accidents. There are many other ways. Someone puts a question to you out in the shop. Make it your practice to never answer any question until you know what is asked. This is fundamental courtesy. Sometimes you know what was asked, but you do not know why. Never try to handle a shop grievance until you know the what and why of that grievance. If you know *why* the fellow is sore, you can do an intelligent job.

Let me summarize. In communicating or telling the boys what you know there are five musts: (1) Speak the other fellow's language, use terms he understands and he will react to you; (2) Never try to sell more than one point at a time; (3) Dramatize that point; (4) Never all criticism; and (5) Use tact, practice adaptability, be courteous.

The things that bring deepest contentment are the human efforts to achieve cooperation with our fellows. Robert Louis Stevenson in *El Dorado*, wrote this: ". . . to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive, and the true success is to labour."

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The supervisor must be competent to deal with the **WHOLE MAN**, and not just his productive skills. This calls for a teaching type of supervision in which the repressive technics of the policeman are replaced by the creative approach of the teacher. The teacher-supervisor will help his people understand the place of his company in the economic and social life of his country and the world. What does his company and, therefore, his job contribute to the general welfare? How does it bring human satisfactions to other people? How is its product or services related to large current issues such as world peace, public health, national stability, civic beauty, etc.?

This is meeting the problem of job satisfaction by developing the significance of the job. It can be done in group meetings, through motion pictures, posters, articles, and all media of communications. However, after all these have played their part, the supervisor must underscore and make their message real in the daily instruction on the job. He must bring the specific application, make the recognition, and engender the team spirit which identifies the worker and the social values on the job.

The supervisor is also the key to the direct attack on the problem of job satisfaction—the actual enrichment of the job. There are four types of job enrichment.

First, the worker may be taught the place of his operation in making the

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finished product. By plant tour, lecture-discussion, pictures, and observation, he learns that his particular job is an essential part of the assembly.

The second type of job enlargement includes the first, and adds instruction in the operations adjacent to his operation. In this way he learns about the work on which he depends and the work beyond his operation on which others depend.

The third form builds on the other two, and actually rotates a worker in a group of jobs. By studying the fatigue levels of the jobs, managers schedule rotation with benefit to the worker and gains in the quality of output.

Finally, the actual enlargement of the job consists of having the operator perform a longer sequence of operations and be responsible for testing the quality of his work. Applied in a metal-working machine shop, this means that the operator would set up his machine, grind and adjust his tools, operate the

machine, and inspect his work. Thus job impoverishment gives way to job enrichment.

The human side of supervision is larger than this treatment suggests. We have dealt with only two persistent problems in which the face-to-face supervisor is a critical force. Although PRODUCTS, PROFITS, and PERSONS are interdependent factors in the business process, they will not stay in balance without the conscious attention of all who are concerned. In a particular sense, the emphasis of our day is on the human side. For, as Edwin Markham has put it:

“We are blind until we see
That, in the human plan,
Nothing is worth the making if
It does not make the man.

Why build these cities glorious
If man unbuilt goes?
In vain we build the world unless
The builder also grows.”

Gustav R. Stahl, has joined the staff of the National Foremen's Institute, New London, Connecticut, as Director of Training. “Gus” completed twelve years as editor of Supervision Magazine with the publication of the December 1950 issue. Prior to being with Supervision Magazine, he was an associate editor of Barron's Financial Weekly, a research staff member of the National Industrial Conference Board and executive secretary of the National Bureau of

Economic Research, Inc. He is a member of the Board of Directors of the National Association of Training Directors, New York City.

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The new format of the M.T.C. News, official publication of the Michigan Training Council, Detroit, calls for congratulations. The December issue, 1950, with its green ink trimmings, is outstanding.