

Book Reviews

SAMUEL B. MAGILL, Editor

SRA FILING SKILLS

Published by
Science Research Associates, Inc.

\$3.50 Approximately 190 Frames

As an experiment in education I gave Miss Beddis the SRA Programmed Instruction Book on Filing Skills to take home and study and she was intrigued at first with the idea and rather captivated by the responsibility which I had given her. For a few days I received glowing reports about how well the subject was going and how easy it was to pick up the information about how to file. Then I became immersed in something else and did not follow up with her for a while and, as a consequence, her program ground to a stop. When I asked her about three weeks later how she was going with her studies, she confessed that she had not looked at the book since I had talked with her last, but that she was positively going to finish it over the weekend. A few weeks later I asked her again how she was doing and told her that I wanted the book back. Upon receiving this ultimatum, Miss Beddis diligently studied the course and tried her best to finish the book. She got approximately half way through on the return journey, or about $\frac{3}{4}$ of the way through the course and stopped, probably forever. Some of the comments I got from her about it were "As I got more into it I became very interested, it really is interesting and it is so easy, and a few of the points are things that I have often had trouble with myself such

as, nothing comes before something." Incidentally, this is quite an exercise in forbearance on the part of Miss Beddis, my secretary, as I am dictating this book review to her. Here it is, with only a minimum of editing, as my contribution to the subject of programmed instruction.

It was over two hundred years ago that *Fleury*, the tutor of the young headstrong King Louis XV, of France, was constrained to observe, "Sire, there is no royal road to learning." Programmed learning techniques make learning easier to take, it is true, but strong motivation is still required. In other words, the boss still has to stand over the worker and insist, but positively, that he must finish the course; otherwise it will stay suspended at just the point where the boss stops applying the pressure.

S.B.M.

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EFFICIENCY AND UPLIFT

Scientific Management in the
Progressive Era

by Samuel Haber

The University of Chicago Press
\$5.00 181 pp.

To many people, Frederick Winslow Taylor is a name dimly recalled as having something to do with a movement called Scientific Management. What this man stood for, and the contributions he made to the study of Management are not yet completely understood, and the aura of controversy which hangs around his image has clouded the story

still further. Was Taylor anti-union, as his detractors claimed? There is a need for a full dress study of the man and his place in American history.

Here, somewhat unexpectedly, is a book which goes much further and accuses Taylor of being the driving force behind the whole crowd of uplifters, dogooders, and visionaries which enlivened the first two decades of the present century. It will surprise many who think they know the essentials of the Taylor story to find his name linked with those of Thorstein Veblen, Jacob Riis, Walter Lippman, Louis Brandeis, Ezra Pound, Walter Croly, William Jennings Bryan, Howard Scott, and a host of others. It is not certain that Taylor knew these people at all, or was interested in what they were doing, and so, to infer that he maneuvered them in their various pursuits is to stretch a yard of cloth pretty far.

The author, a history professor at the University of Delaware, has chosen to write about this era as a period of conflict between human freedom and regimentation and has taken Taylor as a point on which to focus.

The first three chapters of the book contain much worth-while information about Taylor and his career, albeit slanted in a curiously sociological way. After this it gets off into a lot of topics not directly connected with Taylor and in fact not tied in by anything more substantial than innuendo. The citations look impressive, but often do not confirm the facts so dogmatically stated. This is history by association, perhaps; an illustration of how different persons can study the same set of facts and come up with widely different conclusions. Here, also, are many fascinating ex-

amples of the smear, the non-sequitur, and the oh-so-innocent yet damning remark. Haber writes with a stick dipped in acid.

It is too bad that the year of research and the financial grants supplied by four institutions should be expended in such a wrong-side-around portrait of a man who contributed so largely to our Country's present position as the foremost industrial nation of the earth.

S.B.M.

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MANAGEMENT BY EXCEPTION

Systematizing and Simplifying the Managerial Job

by Lester R. Bittel

McGraw-Hill Book Company
\$8.95 320 pp.

Management by exception is today's way of saying that the squeaky wheel gets the grease, and is undoubtedly the most prevalent method for dealing with managerial problems. One's instinctive rebellion against spending all of one's time on things which are not going properly is answered very early in the book. Bittel points out that management by exception has its drawbacks—it tends to create an 'Organization Man' mentality, it should not ignore the other necessary parts of the process lest they, in turn become problems, and it tends to require a flood of paperwork to administer.

However, the point is made that managers do spend more time on problems than on smoothly-running parts of the operation because, in the nature of things, problems take time to resolve. The manager must make many decisions on how to make maximum use of his

time, and this book describes the techniques and procedures for accomplishing this goal.

In an easygoing style almost as friendly as a personal conversation, the author tells how to improve one's managerial skills, how to measure the past and project its lessons into the future, and how to enlist the best skills of fellow workers in achieving these results.

The author is Editor-in-Chief of *Factory* magazine and is an active member of ASTD. Both of these qualifications can be expected to add weight to his opinions on the managerial job.

S.B.M.

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QUANTITATIVE APPROACHES TO MANAGEMENT

by Richard I. Levin, Ph.D. and
C. A. Kirkpatrick, D.C.S.

McGraw-Hill Book Company
\$8.50 365 pp.

In all the stir and ferment of the newer methods of training managers it might be concluded that their most important need is in the areas of the behavioral sciences. Thus great emphasis has been placed on human relations, sensitivity, communications, and empirical procedures for decision-making. This is the day of the Communicator.

While one cannot quarrel with this approach, there is grave danger that we are downgrading, if not ignoring, the vital need to keep abreast of developments in the exact sciences. Managers also need to know the recent developments in mathematical logic, and how to use these newly-discovered tools of analysis and decision-making.

To say that any book on mathematics is "easy to read" is to do it possible harm in the eyes of some who might benefit from it, so we will qualify the statement by saying that it is easier to read than many other books on the same subject. It explains things in ways that a businessman will understand, and it avoids the frightening notations of higher mathematics.

An example is in the way the subject of the matrix is developed. At first, this is defined as a 'list of figures', and an example from foreign trade is used to illustrate it. A short ways further on, matrices are shown to be helpful in planning for maximum utilization of scarce facilities at minimum cost—which is a problem facing business men all the time. In a later chapter, the use of the matrix in game theory—the projection of facts into the realm of uncertainty,—is explained.

Other subjects covered are the use of charts and vectors to determine break-even points, probability theory, decision making under uncertainty, inventory models, and linear programming. Games and strategies, Markov analysis (which is a method of analyzing the current movement of a variable in an effort to predict its future movement) and queuing theory are described.

This is a textbook which appears suitable for training managers for upgrading and updating. It is also sufficiently readable to be worth studying by individuals. A few bold souls might find that by using it as a text, they could put on a pretty useful training course for managers without having to go outside for specialized consulting skills.

S.B.M.