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STAFF IN ORGANIZATION

Staff in Organization

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STAFF IN ORGANIZATION

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Preface

In any organization every executive is either a line or a staff executive, or a combination of the two. And everyone is confronted with the problem of the relationship between the two:

What are the objectives and powers of a line man?

What are the powers of a staff man?

What type of staff does each staff man belong to?

And any overworked executive is naturally concerned with the problem of how to reduce the burdens of his work, or at least to prevent them from growing as the business increases in size and complexity.

Gone, then, are the days when "a business could be operated like a country store," as the head of a large business thought was possible when he fired all his staff. Gone also are the days when the president of one of our largest companies could say that "line are all those people who procure the material, cut it up, put it together and ship it out, while staff are the people who prevent these jobs from being done."

Not only do staffs exist in almost all businesses; their importance and size are growing and will continue to do so. The problem is, therefore, how to make the best use of staff and improve its relations with the line. The purpose of this book is to suggest some ways to resolve this problem.

We attempt to meet this objective in part by comparative

analysis, drawn to some extent from military theory (with proper adaptation), to some extent from the best experience of business.

The military analysis has been supplied largely by one author, who has devoted a lifetime of study to it and has had considerable experience as a staff officer. It is also based on interviews with high military officers, including Generals Dwight D. Eisenhower, Omar C. Bradley, and Anthony C. McAuliffe, and on consultation with the staff of the U.S. Army Management School.

The analysis of staff in business is based on several hundred interviews with staff and line executives in almost one hundred companies (small and large), and five seminars conducted at the American Management Association for some seventy-five "assistants to," as well as on the personal experience of both authors in line and staff positions in business.

It is hoped that the resulting work may provide both a framework for understanding staff-line relationships and guidance in handling them in actual business situations.

Some of the research work and write-ups were provided by Charles Meloy. Editorial work was done by Alice Smith, and Della Jaffee typed several drafts.

The authors are deeply grateful to several hundred executives and military men who gave freely of their ideas, but the responsibility for facts and views is ours. It is hoped that this book may make a contribution to one of the difficult and complex aspects of organization.

Ernest Dale
Lyndall F. Urwick

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1

The Load on Top Management

The burden of work and responsibility carried by the top leadership of business enterprises has increased markedly over the last few decades, is still increasing, and appears likely to continue to increase.

As one authority has said: ¹ "It is one of the paradoxes of industrial progress that as machines ease the physical burden of the workpeople's work, the organization and administration rendered necessary by more mechanization increase the burden on the personnel of management."

The modern factory—and the same is true of many other types of business undertakings—is essentially an extremely complicated system of cooperation. Effectiveness depends less and less on individual efforts and more and more on the total design and the precision with which each individual's contribution is geared to the over-all plan. Thus it demands an intricacy of social discipline and cooperation unprecedented in man's previous history. The automated factory is merely the latest development of this general tendency.

Simultaneously, the principal factor on which man has

previously relied to ensure cooperation—the slowly changing customs of an established society—has failed him. Technical change has accelerated to a point where it is constantly requiring changes in the social patterns of the primary working groups.

As the late Professor Elton Mayo² emphasized, “We have in fact passed beyond that stage of human organization in which effective communication and collaboration were secured by established routines of relationship.” “Civilized society has completely changed its postulates.”³ We have moved from an established to an adaptive society. But we have neglected the social skills necessary to replace the sanctions of an established society. Our capacity to cooperate with each other is actually deteriorating: “We are technically competent as no other age in history has been; and we combine this with utter social incompetence.”⁴

A paradox of leadership has arisen. The responsible leader of a modern business has to persuade his followers to move in two contrary directions:

He has to ensure the intricate cooperation necessary to establish routine—“the god of every social system . . . the seventh heaven of business, the essential component in the success of every factor. . . . When the routine is perfect, understanding can be eliminated except for . . . minor flashes.”⁵

But if the business is to keep its place in a competitive economy where technological change is rapid, he must also stimulate the unorthodox, the originators, the men whose thinking is disturbing to routine. “But there are limits to routine, and it is for the discernment of these limits that foresight is required.”⁶

Moreover, at a time when the irresistible logic of a mechanized economy demands a more refined and intricate social discipline, the whole basis of the manager’s authority—even his right or duty to require any standard of discipline at all—

has been challenged by organizations of employees and the changing thinking in employee-employer relations. This has added enormously to the burden falling upon responsible business managers, both directly and indirectly. Directly, it has meant that more time must be spent in dealing with industrial relations; indirectly, it has compelled the manager to spend more time on personal leadership and on public relations.

Increase in Volume of Industrial Relations Work

Much of the addition to the workload of the chief executive in the field of industrial relations involves tasks that are erratic in their incidence and cannot be delegated.

Since industrial relations problems are often precipitated by union action, and relations between employers and organized labor too often assume the aspect of a kind of warfare in which tactical opportunity plays a large part, the chief executive frequently cannot postpone action. Instead it is forced upon him. Nor can he delegate it when the issues are important. The first duty of the top leader is to *represent* the company for which he is responsible, particularly if the situation is critical and a matter of some public moment.

To take a single example from recent history: In 1959 the leading executives of the steel industry, whatever their other preoccupations and responsibilities, had at times to devote the lion's share of their time to negotiations with the steelworkers' union and the ramifications of those negotiations. So important were the issues and so active the public interest that it was inconceivable for the principal figures in the industry to delegate the work to specialists of subordinate status. The stage was far too brightly lit for understudies to perform for their chiefs. Inevitably the principal actors themselves had to appear at major performances.

There is some evidence that chief executives as a group

have not fully recognized this additional load of industrial relations work as a permanent feature of modern business life and have not, therefore, organized to meet it. Professor Sune Carlson, in his well-known study of the work of chief executives, has commented: ⁷

Most chief executives were trained for their present jobs at a time when the outside activities of a managing director were less important than today, and they often regard these activities not as a normal part of their job but as an extra burden, which they wishfully think of as being of a temporary nature. Since they hope that life will return to "normal" times soon again, they do not plan their work in such a way as they would if they regarded the present external activities as permanent.

As direct authority has been weakened through the organization of employees into unions, reflective business managers have recast concepts of their role. Authority is seen as dependent on "... the degree to which individuals assent to orders."⁸ It therefore demands "... a capacity for vision and wise guidance that must be reacheived daily; since the cooperation of others is a vital element in it, social understanding and social skill are involved equally with technical knowledge and capacity."⁹

Recognition of these facts, either explicit or unconscious, is responsible for the increasing emphasis on the concept of leadership in modern discussions of business management. But leadership is essentially a personal relationship, a condition of mutual confidence between the leader and the led. It can be exercised only if the leader spends *time* on personal contacts with individuals.

Increase in Volume of Public Relations Work

The increased attention management gives to public relations today is in part due to increased realization that good public relations are a factor in public acceptance of products,

and hence in sales. But in good part it is also due to the rise of the unions and the political and social climate that fostered their rise. Strikes and other labor disputes are to a large extent fought out in the court of public opinion; so are legislative contests over regulations affecting business.

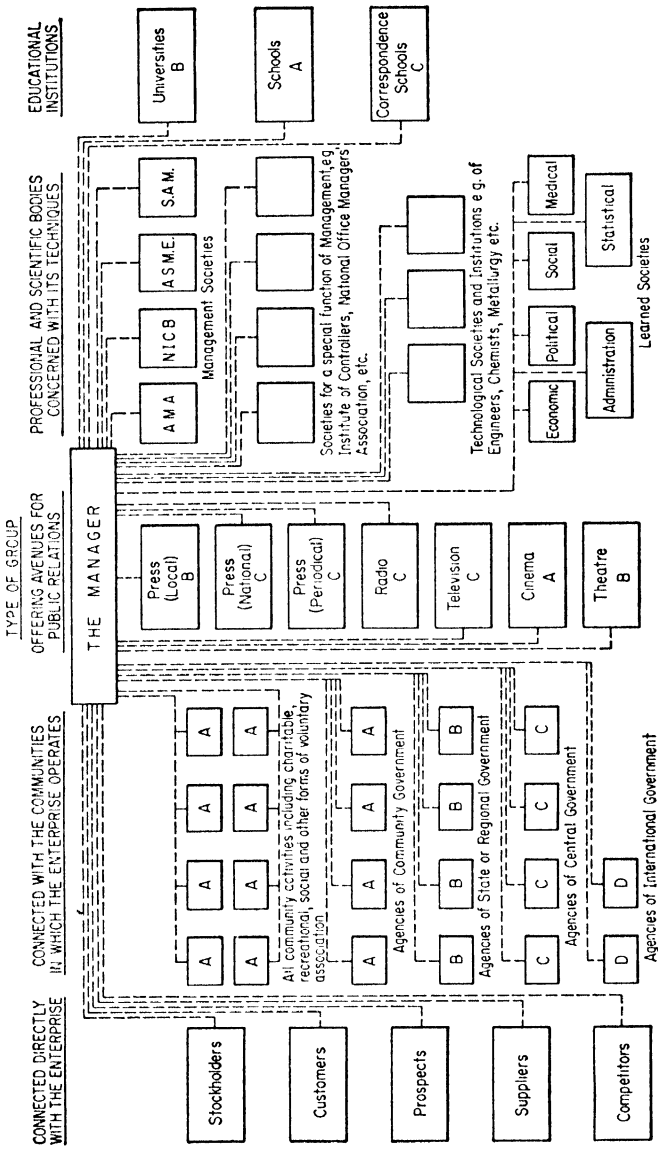
The Depression of the 1930's caused a perceptible fall in the public esteem previously accorded to business leaders, and since that time more farsighted managers have spared no pains to ensure that the enterprises for which they are responsible enjoy as favorable a climate of opinion as possible. The former attitude that business activity is solely the concern of those who happen to own the particular undertaking has almost completely disappeared. The business corporation is seen as a public personality. Its reputation for good citizenship is increasingly regarded as a tangible asset, of as much importance as its reputation for fulfilling its strictly economic role effectively, i.e., for making and/or distributing goods of value.

While advertising and many types of publicity are primarily concerned with the reputation of the goods offered, and the industrial relations function with relationships with employees and their organizations, "public relations" in the modern sense is concerned with the general reputation of a business among all the groups with which it comes in contact and with the public at large.

And this means that the chief executive becomes involved in contacts with a whole series of further groups. A generalized pattern is shown in Figure 1.

Some of this task may be delegated, and most large corporations have a vice president or director of public relations. It can also be assigned to a board chairman who is prepared to devote a good portion of his time to active participation in the affairs of the corporation. In the latter case, the chairman may handle outside contacts (public relations and the external

INCREASING COMPLEXITY OF PUBLIC RELATIONS - GROUPS WITH WHICH THE MANAGER SHOULD KEEP CONTACT



Multiply As by every Community in which the enterprise operates
 Multiply Bs by every State or Region in which the enterprise operates
 Multiply Cs by every Country in which the enterprise operates

Figure 1

part of industrial relations), while the chief executive concentrates on the internal management of the corporation.

But, though the principal executive may shunt detail by using specialists or upward delegation, he cannot entirely escape the burden of public relations. The mere fact that there is an important executive in the organization whose duty it is to emphasize this aspect of every decision complicates the task of coordination. The latter may relieve his chief of some public appearances, but he is also likely to discover opportunities for others and present cogent reasons why, on each particular occasion, the presence of the chief executive will be of the utmost benefit to the corporation. Further, he may find that other executives in the organization who have shown a pronounced personal taste for oratory should be restrained: Their appearance on public occasions is likely to do the corporation's reputation more harm than good—because their discretion evaporates under the influence of an audience, a microphone, and a camera. The restraint must, in most cases, be imposed by the chief executive himself; further, he may have to substitute for them in public appearances.

Other Reasons for Increasing Workload

Apart from, and in addition to, the factors deriving from general social evolution, there are a number of developments in business corporations themselves that have added to the burden. The business enterprise:

1. Has become larger.
2. Has become more complex.
3. Operates over wider areas.
4. Operates over, and is judged on, a longer time-scale.

Increase in Size. Table 1 shows the twelve largest business corporations in the United States in 1957, as measured by the number of employees. For comparison, there were five

private corporations bigger than the United States Army in 1938, and six bigger than the Navy was at that time.

Such official figures as are available indicate that the bigger undertakings employ a large proportion of the working population,¹⁰ that large companies may be tending to become more numerous, and that the proportion of the working population employed in small business is falling.

TABLE 1. THE TWELVE LARGEST INDUSTRIAL CORPORATIONS, 1957

Rank	Company	Number of employees
1	General Motors	588,160
2	General Electric	282,029
3	U.S. Steel	271,037
4	Ford Motor	191,759
5	Bethlehem Steel	166,859
6	Standard Oil (N.J.)	160,000
7	Western Electric	144,055
8	Chrysler	136,187
9	Westinghouse	128,572
10	International Tel. & Tel.	128,000
11	Goodyear Rubber	101,386
12	Boeing Aircraft	94,998

Greater Complexity. Few businessmen would question the statement that business operations have become more complex over the last half century. One cause is the volume, range, and intensity of technical development, which has increased the volume and variety of specialized and technical knowledge the businessman must have at his disposal if his corporation is to take full advantage of the opportunities available to it. Another is the application of scientific methods and the spirit of scientific inquiry to management itself, a field where work is dependent on advances in psychology, sociology, anthropology, and so on. In this area, too, the businessman must not lose the

possible advantages to be derived from technical developments.

The chief executive's task of managing people has been greatly complicated by these advances. Half a century ago the great majority of his colleagues and subordinates were men of general business experience who shared a common outlook on life and a common experience of the problems of a particular trade or industry. This is no longer the case. The larger corporation especially tends to be a galaxy of specialists. It consists of groups of people trained differently for different callings and spending much of their working lives in the intensive practice of particular skills.

This is inevitable; specialization makes for efficiency. But it also presents the chief executive with problems of organization and coordination that are new both in range and in character. To manage a group of people trained for a common trade is one thing. To manage a group of people trained for a variety of specialized callings and to reconcile their diverging professional outlooks and interests is quite another. The first task is merely to turn eleven football players into a squad. The second is to take tennis stars, track athletes, wrestlers, boxers, and crew men and from these heterogeneous elements train a unified ball team able to win a pennant.

This problem was well put by John L. McCaffrey, a chief executive of International Harvester, in describing what top executives think about at night: ¹¹

The biggest trouble with industry is that it is full of human beings. . . . We sit at our desks all day, while around us whiz and gyrate a vast number of special activities, some of which we only dimly understand. And for each of these activities there is a specialist. . . . All of them, no doubt, are good to have. All seem to be necessary. All are useful on frequent occasions. But it has reached the point where the greatest task of the president is to understand

enough of all these specialties so that when a problem comes up he can assign the right team of experts to work on it. . . . How can he maintain the interest of and get full advantage from the specialists who are too specialized to promote? On the one hand, the company absolutely requires the skills of the specialists in order to carry on complicated operations. On the other hand, he has to get future top management from somewhere.

Quite apart from these problems of internal management, the environment in which business must operate has become much more complex. It is a matter of common observation that the government plays a more frequent and more intricate part in the regulation of business affairs, even in a free economy, than it did in the past. Antitrust laws, regulations of the Interstate Commerce Commission, labor laws, tax regulations—there are a thousand directions in which the business executive must take government into account in making his decisions. War, or the necessities of national defense in peacetime, multiply these points of enforced contact enormously. The businessman in charge of the medium-sized or small corporation may have to conduct negotiations with half a dozen Washington agencies. And even the head of a larger business must have some familiarity with contract contingencies and hazards, and perhaps conduct some of the negotiations personally.

Operations over Larger Areas. There is little question that there has been a tremendous increase over the first half of this century in the number of business corporations in the United States that:

1. Attempt to have a national rather than a local market.
2. Have actually dispersed their manufacturing and/or warehousing operations to provide coast-to-coast coverage.
3. Have made serious efforts to extend their selling and/or manufacturing interests to countries outside the United States.

The Longer Time-Scale. Still another factor is the longer time-scale considered today in business decisions. It is probably the most important, though least recognized, of all the developments tending to increase the load on top management. And there are two reasons for it, one objective and the other subjective.

Objectively, as Peter Drucker has pointed out,¹² it "... is the essence of economic and technological progress that the time-span for the fruition and proving out of a decision is steadily lengthening." Thus,¹³

... sixty years ago few business decisions... needed more than a few years both to be fully effective and to repay the investment. Today it is the exceptional business decision that does not have a futurity of ten years or more. . . . Technological progress has succeeded in converting the businessman from the short-range trader of classical economics to the long-range planner of today—who has to take a twenty-years' view.

However, there is a double time-element in every decision. In its daily work, management cannot separate the present and the future. "The most vital decisions on the future," Drucker writes,¹⁴ "are often made as decisions on the present—on present research budgets or on the handling of a grievance, on promoting this man and letting that one go, on maintenance standards, or on customer service."

The subjective reason for the change is a difference in the attitude of company managers.

Fifty years ago, the relations between a corporation and those it employed were normally regarded strictly as a bargain between buyer and seller.¹⁵ The corporation wanted help for a specific purpose. As long as it needed that help, it had jobs to offer and was prepared to pay whatever would attract the individuals who happened to want jobs. But there was little sense of permanence in the arrangement or any recogni-

tion that permanence was needed. The attitude was essentially that the individual was hired for a specific job, like a shoe-shine boy or a taxicab operator, not that he was part of a system of human cooperation in which he had a right of participation on a permanent or quasi-permanent basis.

The attitude of employers toward the businesses they had founded and often partially owned was not dissimilar. It assumed that the individual's desire for dollars was *the* motive force that kept business moving. And, obviously, that was a stimulus that could not operate beyond the lifetime of the individual concerned.

Business enterprises were regarded as private property at the almost unfettered discretion of those who happened to own them at any particular moment. And the owners' interest could not, it was assumed, extend beyond the day when their brief personal lives drew to a close. High executives often refused to discuss, or even to think about, a future when their unique contributions would no longer be available to the corporation. Some of them regarded it as impertinent if any of their younger colleagues dared even to contemplate such a future.

With the development of the large-scale corporation owned by widely scattered stockholders and supervised by professional managers with little or no participation in ownership, attitudes toward employee tenure and perpetuation of the corporation itself are both being profoundly modified.

Not only are unions forcing the adoption of such measures as seniority and the guaranteed annual wage, but managements themselves are coming more and more to consider the workforce a definite part of the organization. Increased attention is paid to the selection of even the lowliest employee, because management expects and hopes that he will stay with the corporation for a period of years, even for a lifetime. And the corollary of this expectation is that the corporation must

offer the employee not merely a job but the framework for a life.

At the same time, longer and less personal views are taken of the responsibility of business leadership. To a greater degree than ever before, it is realized that while men pass and die, the corporation is, in theory, immortal. The duty of executives is not primarily to make a brilliant showing this year or next year, but so to direct policy that their companies achieve maximum profitability over a long period.

Increasingly, long-term profitability is the criterion by which high executive performance is being judged. To be sure, a man must keep his company out of the red in the present. It will do him no good to have brilliant strategical plans for the battle ten years ahead if his tactical handling of today's struggle is so faulty that defeat is immediate. Businesses, like nations, must stay alive today in order to enjoy the future tomorrow. But for men in the upper salary brackets, the high approval of their peers is a substantially greater reward than any that money can buy. And that approval is more and more reserved, not for those who make a sensational profit this year at the expense of future stability, but for those who display the larger wisdom that thinks and plans in decades. The current interest in, and enthusiasm for, executive development is merely a special aspect of this general tendency to view business policy and performance on a much longer time-scale than was customary even twenty years ago.

But this tendency, while eminently healthy, does make heavier demands on the time, skill, and wisdom of high executives than is sometimes realized. To forecast the scale of an industrial undertaking a year ahead is, comparatively speaking, a simple exercise. To project the economic future of a great nation over two or three decades and to relate the practical development of a large undertaking to all the multifarious factors that may affect its growth over such a period

demands vision, skill, and application of the highest quality. Yet these capacities, and no less, are what business demands of those who lead its large undertakings today. It is no longer a question of brilliant political gifts but of economic statesmanship of the first order.

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¹⁵ Compare E. A. Filene, *Successful Living in this Machine Age*, Simon and Schuster, Inc., New York, 1931, p. 20: "It was universally supposed, for instance, that labor was a commodity. Nevertheless, labor could not and did not act like a commodity. It acted like human beings. It acted in fact, from much the same motives with which employers act, and not even the most dismal economist supposed that employers were commodities."

2

Effect of Overload on Executive Health

The tradition that American business executives tend to allow their work to ride them too hard is of comparatively long standing. A story by the late Rudyard Kipling, written some time before 1909, began: ¹

It came without warning, at the very hour his hand was outstretched to crumple the Holz and Gunsberg Combine. The New York doctors called it over-work, and he lay in a darkened room, one ankle crossed above the other, tongue pressed into palate, wondering whether the next brain surge of prickly fires would drive his soul from all anchorage.

More recently, the idea has begun to attract widespread attention in the more popular sections of the American press. A recent article in *Esquire* ² opened:

Not so long ago, I was lunching with a group of executives from one of our better-known corporations, and I sat fascinated as the food was brought to the table and each of them pulled out some sort of pill-box and treated himself to a white, or green, or pink

pill. One, as a matter of fact, took two pills; different colors, of course. All of a sudden, someone in the group looked up at me and said, "What's the matter with you that you're so healthy?"

During the next few days I chalked up a long list of acquaintances so beset by migraine, or ulcers, or a "tired feeling" that they've taken out membership in the currently fashionable "pill-box set." . . . How come people call the big-shot row "Ulcer Gulch" instead of the old "front office"?

But impressions are one thing and facts another. To what extent is the top executive group in American business afflicted with illnesses that are the direct result of overwork, such as hypertension, ulcers, heart trouble, and mental disturbance? In terms of incidence and age does the experience of this group display significant differences from that of comparable segments of the rest of the population? Are the death rate and the average age at death higher or lower than those of comparable groups? Unfortunately, there are not many statistically comparable data on this point. The only figures obtainable at present are the results of random studies in which, for the most part, the statistical universe is not too well defined. However, enough data are available for some tentative conclusions.

In July, 1957, the Life Extension Examiners of New York City issued a report on health examinations of 5,000 business executives whose average age was 43.7 years. More than 41 per cent of the entire group had substandard health, and for those over forty the percentage was 51.3. Among the findings were:

<i>All ages</i>	<i>Per cent</i> (5,000 equals 100 per cent)
Overweight (i.e., 10 per cent or more above normal)	11.2
Elevated blood pressure	8.1
Organic heart disease	7.6
Other significant findings	14.2

	<i>Per cent</i> (5,000 equals 100 per cent)
<i>Over forty years of age</i>	
Overweight	12.6
Elevated blood pressure	11.4
Organic heart disease	10.0
Other significant findings	17.3

A comparison of the statistics above with those covering 2,000 health examinations published by the Life Extension Examiners in 1949 gives evidence of a definite increase in the incidence of organic heart disease. In 1949, the percentage (of the 2,000) was 3.3, as against the 7.6 per cent figure found in the 1957 study.

In preparation for this book a spot survey was made of the health of executives in a medium-sized company which has 4,000 employees and makes a high rate of return on its capital investment. It is an expanding organization, a fact which makes its health situation even more alarming. The findings revealed that:

The chairman of the board had had a major stomach operation that almost cost him his life because he was so run down that he was hardly able to survive the strain.

The executive vice president, aged fifty, had had three heart attacks and a stroke. He was retired on full pay and shortly afterwards committed suicide. Being estranged from his family, he had nothing in the world to live for except his job.

The treasurer trembles each time the president talks to him and has developed a skin disease.

The employee relations director, who always criticized the head office when he was in a subordinate position, now feels that he cannot live up to the job, has had a nervous breakdown, and is under constant treatment by a psychiatrist.

The vice president in charge of marketing had had a heart attack while playing with his children after "a record game of golf."

The vice president in charge of planning had become a manic-depressive and had to be moved to another location—to a “soft job.”

The New England regional manager had suddenly dropped dead of a heart attack.

The director of purchasing had done the same.

The vice president in charge of finance had been fired after a disagreement with the president; he had overdrawn on his charge accounts with local firms because of the pressure his wife had been exerting on him to live beyond his means.

Several other high executives had suffered from nervous breakdowns and hypertension; some of them had had to take prolonged rests from “overwork.”

The president finally became so concerned about his executives' health that he called in an actuary to make a study of the life expectancy of the top management committee. At the meeting where the results were considered he announced that, on the actuary's figures, four out of the twenty-five men present would be dead within a year. He ordered compulsory periodical physical examinations and consultations with psychiatrists for every member of the top management group—with “confidential” reports to be sent to him.

Each of his executives is frightened at the implications of these examinations. They have big mortgages on their homes, installments due on their automobiles, mink coats, etc., and high charges with local tradesmen. They cannot afford to be sick, to be reported in bad physical or mental shape, or to lose the equanimity of temper and cheerful disposition that are the hallmarks of a successful executive.

Another medium-sized corporation has expressed its health problem among top executives in an organization chart (Figure 2).

A grim conclusion to the effect that one out of every two executives is a sick man—and may not even know it—is in-

icated by a study that an American Medical Association official described as "... one of the most exhaustive surveys of executive health ever completed." Its shocking finding: 55.8 per cent of executives given comprehensive physical examinations have something unsuspected wrong with them. Concerning the diseases usually associated with pressure, the study

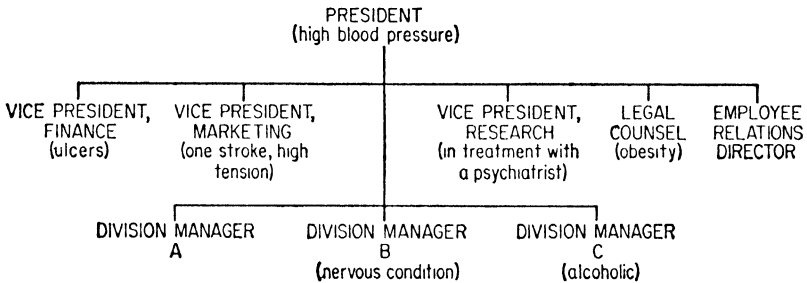


Figure 2

found: One of six executives examined had heart and artery diseases, one in every ten had nervous or mental illness, and one in every twelve had gastrointestinal troubles.³

It is only fair to state that some authorities do not believe pressure is the main cause of coronary trouble. For example, Dr. Ancel Keys, of the University of Minnesota, in an address before the annual meeting of the American Mutual Insurance Alliance in Chicago,⁴ cited overindulgence in fatty foods as a primary cause. Similarly, Dr. Paul Dudley White, in a letter to one of the authors, stated he felt that, apart from constitutional defects and inheritance, the major causes of heart trouble are not tension and overwork, but overeating and lack of exercise.

Even if these two statements are true, however, it is still possible to believe that overwork is a contributing cause, since overeating may be a defense against pressure and lack of exercise can be due to lack of time.

Turning to the question of longevity, recent figures on the

life expectancy of white Americans are: men, 65.5 years and women, 71 years.

Reasonably good figures are available for the life spans in various professions and skilled occupations, but, curiously, there is no reliable figure for those engaged in business, possibly because the category is too large. Spot checks indicate that it is well below the national average. For example in 1956, *Advertising Age* checked the ages of death of men in advertising and found that the average was 59.7 years. Again, Samuel Markel, president of the American Fidelity and Casualty Company, has estimated that businessmen die at least six years before their time.⁵

The same phenomenon is occurring in Great Britain, though, unquestionably, the pace is slower there than in the United States. Dr. Reginald Bennett, a psychologist and member of Parliament, has written: ⁶

While the expectation of life for the population as a whole has risen dramatically, that of the businessman has remained unchanged for virtually two centuries. At present, the expectation of life at birth in this country [Great Britain] is 66 years, and among those who survive their thirtieth birthday, 71 years. Fifty years ago, in 1901, the expectation at birth was 46 years, and after the thirtieth birthday, 62 years. Eighty years ago, in 1871, the expectation of life at birth was only 40 years.

For the businessman, according to figures published by Sir Francis Galton in 1872, the average expectation of life among those who had passed their thirtieth birthday during the period 1758 to 1843, was 68 years. A study of the obituaries today does not present a favourable comparison with Galton. It is startling to see in how many cases, and how suddenly, the end comes at 59.

Admittedly the evidence for the general proposition discussed in this chapter is by no means comprehensive or conclusive. However, there are fairly strong grounds for maintaining:

1. That the duties of the chief executive in business have become much more demanding and exacting over the last twenty years, particularly in public relations and coordination.

2. That executives as a class have poorer health and shorter lives than other corresponding groups in the population.

The author of the article in *Esquire*, already quoted, explains the second phenomenon by reference to four causes: ⁷

Friction generated by competitive internal politicking top management ignores, and sometimes encourages

Expense account living that often warps the individual's sense of values

Anxiety produced by the relentless pressure to acquire status and "status symbols"

Recreational activities that, by and large, depend upon destructive urges; tearing people down, so to speak

What does all this add up to? Just take the first letter of each of the points above and you'll see: FEAR.

But the author's last three points are really only elaborations or symptoms of the first, and what he has to say about the first ⁸ bears directly on the problem discussed here.

What makes for such destructive competition? One factor is the neurotic drive that turns certain executives into power-hungry dictators. But there are two others even more important. First, we've spent too much time in producing industrial specialists and not enough in developing industrial leaders. . . . Second, we've refused to recognize or admit that the various components of our industrial machine are driven by different people with different motives. . . . We have three major divisions of one business looking at the same product from three conflicting points of view. . . . Is it any wonder that we have friction? And, mind you, this friction exists where people are working together with the best of intentions. Think what it must be when some power-hungry industrial Captain Bligh deliberately uses these pressures "to keep the boys on their toes," as he puts it.

In other words, this particular writer attributes much of the poor health record among executives directly to shortage of effective personal leadership and lack of adequate coordination. It is not only chief executives themselves who die younger than they need because their work is too complex for the forms of organization through which they attempt to cope with it. Their principal subordinates suffer with them.

On the other hand, the tendency of executive work to become more exacting and burdensome is an inescapable consequence of the evolution of a mechanized economy. Chief executives cannot hope for any lightening of the load merely by not doing the work or by neglecting the responsibilities it involves. They have tried that already, with regard to both internal personal contacts (i.e., leadership) and coordination. The results to date do not encourage high hopes of a satisfactory solution along such lines.

Nor is it enough to tell a chief executive merely that he should delegate more. Many of his duties in the fields in which the increase of load is most marked are essentially personal. He cannot delegate them. In his duties of representation, the public will not allow him to delegate them entirely externally, and if he tries to delegate them entirely internally, his organization begins to suffer from lack of leadership. If he tries to delegate duties of coordination, his principal subordinates will not stand for it; they will accept only his personal authority.

The problem is not essentially one of attempting to throw onto the shoulders of others the *whole* of functions that depend for their adequate discharge on some element of the personal leadership and example of the chief. It is essentially a question of determining by careful analysis what *part* of such functions could conceivably be carried out by someone else. And since, by definition, these functions involve the chief's personality and authority, on what terms of relationships is it conceivable

that both chief executives and their immediate subordinates will accept such partial delegation?

In other words, there is a strong prima-facie case for the definite step forward in thought and practice about business organization suggested in later chapters. And the place where that step is most needed is the chief executive's office.

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⁷ Davis, *loc. cit.*

⁸ *Ibid.*

3

How Executives Spend Their Time

Direct studies of the actual workloads of chief executives are few in number, for there are certain obstacles to an effective recording job, even where the executive is willing and able to cooperate. These include: (1) the great variations in the job from day to day and week to week, and (2) the occurrence of the urgent and unavoidable "first priorities" already discussed. It is doubtful whether the normal techniques of motion analysis and time study can be applied to the task with advantage.

These considerations do not rule out objective study of the working practices of chief executives by a qualified outside observer. There are management consultants who make a regular practice of advising chief executives on their personal problems.

But even where a chief executive himself would have no objection to the continued company of such an observer over a period sufficient for results of value—which would probably

run into many months—it is extremely doubtful that all others concerned would be equally willing. Much of a chief executive's work with people is of a highly personal and confidential character. Difficult negotiations or delicate interviews are not usually conducted to the best advantage in the presence of a third party, however discreet and dispassionate the observer. Further, the mere fact that a process is known to be under observation tends to alter the behavior of the participants. Just as the worker who is being time-studied often works faster or more slowly than he normally does, so the executive whose work is being analyzed may adapt his behavior to what he imagines is expected of him, and this may bear little relation to his usual work habits and practices.

These objections are less serious if the method of intermittent observation (interviews with the executive, etc.) is followed. But where the problem is, by definition, the overloading of the executive, it may be difficult for him to find the time for a series of really searching interviews.

A technique of self-observation can, of course, be used. But the best type of chief executive tends to be an extrovert, and such a man finds it difficult to be consistently introspective and to note down the character of his every action and the time he spends on it over a period long enough to make the observations of value.

Lack of Adequate Literature

These difficulties probably account for the lack of adequate literature dealing with what the chief executive actually does. There are, of course, innumerable books on management, but the great majority of them tend to discuss functions somewhat theoretically. They give a more or less adequate picture of what a chief executive *ought* to do, but provide less information on *how* chief executives, in fact, deal—or fail to deal—with the various duties that theory assigns to them.

There is also no lack of biographies of eminent businessmen. But these tend to focus primarily on personality rather than on performance, and, like most biographies, they incline to one of two extremes: Either they are pious memorials, financed by the man's family or corporation, or they are journalistic enterprises. In the one case, objective discussion of weaknesses, as well as of strengths, would be inappropriate and, from the author's viewpoint, unwise. In the other case, the desire to stimulate sales by dramatizing crises or "debunking" established reputations frequently takes priority over intellectual integrity. Thus neither type is geared to the requirements of a scientific exploration of the subject.

Existing Studies

By far the best study available at present is Professor Sune Carlson's analysis of the workloads of ten executives,¹ nine of them Swedish and one French.

In the United States, a *Fortune* poll, conducted in 1946,² brought to light the opinions of chief executives about their workloads. It indicated that the burdens were excessive. Reference to the heavy workload also occurs in the research program on Leadership in Democracy in progress at Ohio State University, but little factual material on this has as yet been published. Professor Marshall E. Dimock's *The Executive in Action*,³ while full of enlightening illustrations of executive behavior drawn from the author's personal experience, is again a discussion of functions or problems rather than a close analysis of methods and performance. It says little about workload.

The majority of the American studies of actual workload are drawn from the field of government.⁴

But it is principally in the nature of the functions of the chief executive in business that differences occur. Unlike his counterpart in a government bureau, the chief executive has no political master. It is, therefore, more difficult for him to

maintain the distinction between policy making and executive activities. As will be seen later, it is precisely the failure to keep these activities distinct from each other that is one of the primary causes of the chief executive's overload.

An Ad Hoc Study—Method of Inquiry

With a view to supplementing the inadequate information available, the authors undertook a quick inquiry into the workload of ten typical American chief executives: two in the oil industry, two in the iron and steel industry, two in insurance, and one in each of the following types of business: automobiles, banking, heavy capital goods, and a public utility. The numbers of employees in the ten companies were:

<i>Company</i>	<i>Number of employees</i>
A	100,000
B	18,000
C	8,000
D	5,000
E	4,000
F	3,500
G	2,500
H	1,500
I	500
J	150

Some of the data were collected by one of the authors, who personally sat in the offices of the chief executives concerned. Some were recorded by the chief executives themselves. Some were obtained by the private secretaries or assistants of the chief executives. The remainder were secured by interviews with the executives and their assistants.

The practice of most of the companies studied was already known to some degree. One of the authors also had some personal acquaintance with the executives selected, their methods of management, and their working habits—and in half the cases his acquaintance had extended over several

years. The observation periods varied from three days to four weeks, the average being a working week.

In so brief an inquiry, exposed to all the difficulties that have already been enumerated, it was not reasonable to aim at valid statistical results or hope to build up a picture of the behavior of the "typical," or "average," American chief executive. The cases were too few and too heterogeneous. All that was hoped was to secure a rough idea of the proportion of time spent by this particular group of chief executives on inside and outside contacts, of the kinds of people with whom contacts were most frequent, and of the length of the working week. Because the observer was personally acquainted with the executives concerned and because of the brevity of the observation period, it is probable that they modified their behavior during the investigation.⁵

For these reasons, the results should not be regarded as averages but merely as a series of individual descriptions, with some attempt at analysis. Probably their chief value is as evidence that the findings of Carlson's far more detailed and prolonged inquiry apply also to American executives.

Analysis of Leadership Used in the Study. The analysis of the functions of leadership used in the study was the same as that published in the authors' *Profitably Using the General Staff Position in Business*,⁶ and shown in Figure 3. It is compounded of the analysis suggested by Professor Paul Pigors⁷ and the analysis of administration or management originally suggested by Henri Fayol.⁸ The word *communication* has been added, for it should be emphasized that none of the other aspects of leadership is possible unless communication takes place. Too often leaders are out of touch with the led, operating in the dark with no accurate appreciation of the thoughts and feelings of those whose working lives it is their duty to direct.

Even high executives who boast that "my door is always

THE FUNCTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

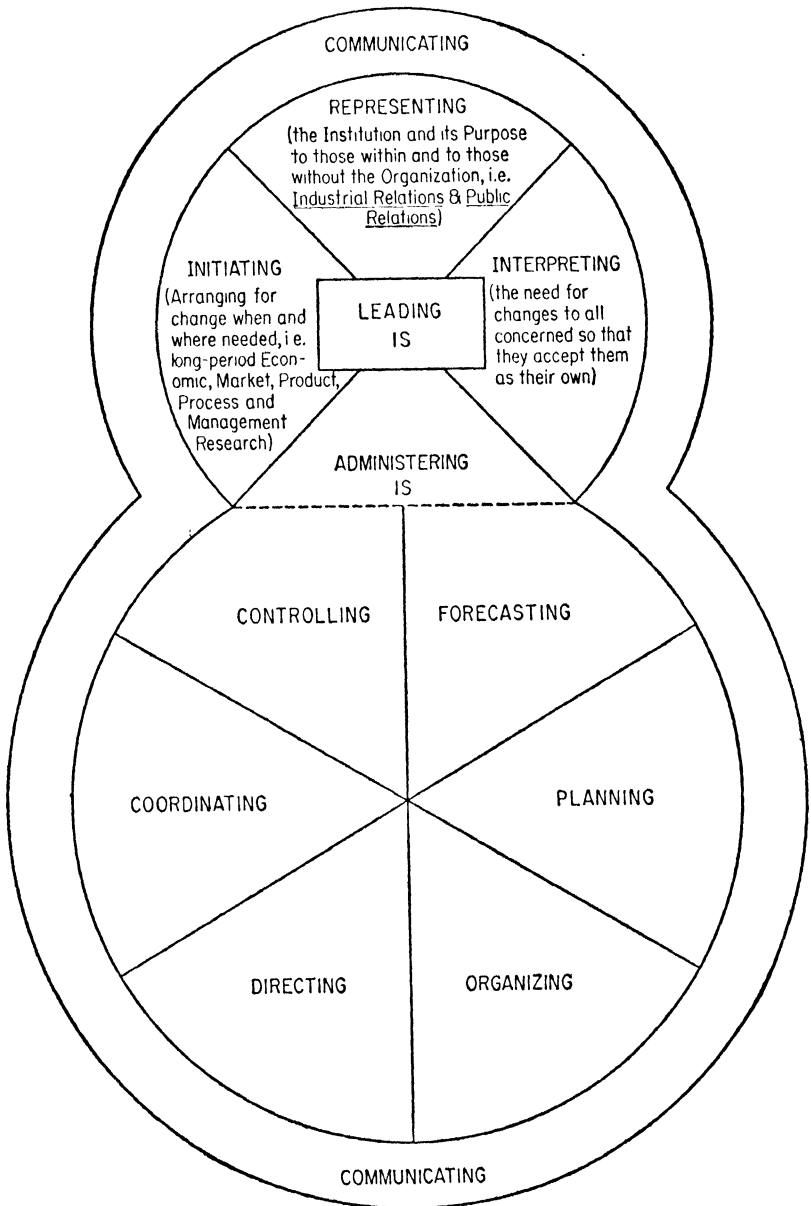


Figure 3

open to anyone in the organization" too frequently keep a dragon at the gate. The fact that the dragon may be a young and elegant female, with an irreproachable manner and a charming smile, does not alter this. She is still a dragon, and more difficult to deal with because her manner is disarming and her smile a shield.

"I'm terribly sorry, Joe; I know he's most anxious to see you. But the president of the XYZ Corporation just came straight across without telephoning. And he said I wasn't to disturb him for *anyone*. Give me a call about ten tomorrow." It has been said, is being said, a thousand times a week all across the United States. It is reasonable enough, perhaps unavoidable. But Joe, who has been screwing up his courage for the interview for a week, cannot manage the letdown. Most likely he calls her the next morning to "tell the Boss it doesn't matter." One more chance of communication upward has been missed.

The importance of upward communications should not, however, divert attention from the fact that communication downward is often equally defective. There are policy manuals, charts, procedures, and so on, *ad nauseam*. But the form in which they are issued often leaves much to be desired. They are badly expressed, not conveniently arranged, difficult to amend, and usually out of date. No distinction is drawn between ephemeral instructions that cease to have significance within a few days or weeks and the standing rules by which the organization is guided. In some cases, they are issued by half a dozen specialized staff groups at headquarters, and no attempt is made to coordinate them. In others, they are published by a single office, but it is not that of the chief executive, and it may not be clear that they are general instructions that carry his approval and authority. Under such circumstances, it is not surprising that there are likely to be misunderstandings and disputes about duties and authority.

The function of publishing and issuing all general instructions—that is, instructions that affect more than one function—should be lodged in the office of the chief executive, or, at a lower echelon, in the office of the man who has over-all responsibility for the management of the unit. If another office issues them, it should be made crystal-clear that they carry the authority of the chief executive of the unit.

Few chief executives of companies or units employing half a dozen different functions have the time to devote to the details of drafting and publishing instructions; often they are conscious that supplying face-to-face leadership has a far more important priority. Consequently, they issue the written instructions hurriedly or delegate the task to some other function, and the instructions are of less value because of this.

Thus a vicious circle is created. The chief has too much to do to attend to paperwork. Then, because the paperwork is done superficially, or the instructions lack authority, subordinates do not always accept the written procedures and rules. In consequence, disputes arise over matters of detail, and the chief must spend more time straightening them out. And he can obtain the extra time only at the price of still further neglect of the paperwork. Much of the overload on the chief executive may thus be due to the fact that he lacks a staff to draft the instructions for him.

Difficulties of an Analysis by Function. Professor Carlson distributed the work of the group of top executives whom he observed in terms of (1) place of work, (2) contact with persons and institutions, and (3) nature of questions handled. This approach made it easier to observe and analyze what the executives actually do.

Where the aim is to determine why chief executives are overloaded and what can be done to reduce their burdens, an analysis by functions is generally more useful. It also emphasizes the activities essential to the full discharge of a chief

executive's responsibilities that are being neglected or slighted because of other calls on his time.

The analysis of leadership shown in Figure 3 proved practical for this purpose, except for the function of "interpretation." Neither the chief executives concerned nor their subordinates had considered this activity a definite "function" up to this point; hence they found it impossible to say how much time was devoted to it.

The concept of "interpretation" as a separate and identifiable activity, in fact, has not hitherto been generally used in management thought and literature. But it is obvious that the modern executive must spend a substantial percentage of his time making clear to his subordinates the reasons for policies, proposed or adopted, in persuading the subordinates of the necessity of changes, and in expounding what Mary Follett described as "the law of the situation."⁹

A modern business in a democratic country is seldom a pure autocracy. However important it may be that a chief executive should be decisive, it is nearly always more important that the decisions be acceptable to the community, or at least do no violence to its general sentiments. It is easy to overdramatize the act of recording the decision itself, and to lose sight of the gradual precipitation of ideas and opinions leading up to it and the timing and exposition that make it effective. As Mary Follett observed, "An executive decision is only a moment in a process."¹⁰

Thus interpretation necessarily requires much of the time and energy of all executives who do not attempt to be dictators. And even those who make the attempt probably have to devote a considerable slice of their time to "interpreting"—to themselves and to others—the reasons why events do not correspond exactly with the detailed plans about which they have given such positive instructions. But they do not identify the activity as such. Probably they think of it as part of co-

ordination, communication, or some other management function.

Contact with People. By far the quickest and most effective means of communication is direct contact with people, either individually or in groups. The American chief executives studied spent between two-thirds and nine-tenths of their total working time in contact with other people, either inside or outside their companies.

Similarly, Carlson, reporting on European executives, says: ¹¹ "The length of time during which the chief executives could work in their offices undisturbed by visitors varied considerably. . . . For some of them this time amounted to less than half an hour during a "normal" week day; for others it was as much as an hour or an hour and a half."

One executive, he reports, had 31½ hours alone in thirty-five days, but more than half of this period was composed of short intervals of ten minutes or so, and during these times he was interrupted by telephone calls. Thus these intervals were "... not only of little value for working purposes, but [were] also unsatisfactory as rest intervals."¹² Nolting's analysis of twenty-one city managers showed that in an average 9-hour day, 6½ to 7½ hours were spent in personal contacts.¹³ Data on twelve German directors give a longest working day of 16 hours, of which 11 were spent in personal contacts, and a shortest working day of 6 hours, of which 4½ were so spent. The average was 10 hours for the working day, 7 hours for personal contacts.¹⁴

Working Time. In the group of ten American chief executives studied, daily working time was between 8 and 13 hours; the average was 10½ and the median 10 hours. The workweek totaled from 4 to 7 days; both the median and the average were 5¼ days. Weekly working hours ranged from 35 to 90.

In the great majority of cases the week end was short. For the majority it ranged from half a day to a day and a half.

Evenings, when not spent on business, usually included some time spent on work at home—for example, in reading company reports, economic and trade bulletins, and professional journals. There was little time for outside activities, for sport, the theater, literature, politics, family recreation, or simply doing nothing and resting. Vacations were brief and infrequent for the most part. They tended to be so closely scheduled that all the time available was allocated to prescribed events.

These particulars were corroborated by subordinates. Many of them found it impossible to see their chiefs without waiting for a considerable time. Private secretaries reported that dictation was constantly interrupted. In a number of companies the chief was uninterrupted and alone very rarely during working days and then only for brief periods. He had very little opportunity for reflective thinking or for uninterrupted attention to those duties that he could not delegate to anyone else.

These observations are confirmed to a considerable degree by an inquiry carried out by A. S. Talbott, a California advertising man, who was interested in comparing the working habits and personal happiness of chief executives in small companies, mostly owner-managed, and those in large national companies.¹⁵ He checked with the parking-lot attendants at the plants, interviewed wives, secretaries, and doctors, gathered information at the executives' golf and yacht clubs, and even checked their private medicine cabinets.

Of the 111 executives he studied, 47 did not work excessive hours, and only 10 of these worked a straight forty-hour week. The remaining 37 put in thirty hours a week or less, getting to work around 10 A.M., knocking off at 3 P.M., taking three-hour lunches, playing golf or going fishing three or more times a week, and often stretching their week ends to four or five days. Of these 37, 32 either owned their own companies or were officers of small local undertakings; of the 10 steady but moderate workers, 3 were small-company men.

Of the other 64 men, almost all of whom were employees of large national corporations, "... eleven worked 69 hours a week to as high as 112 hours—and I mean all work." Most were in the office by 8 A.M. and left at 6:30 with a pile of home-work. When they went out to dinner (on an average of three times a week), it was always on business.

"The 'eager beavers,'" Talbott noted, "dress better as do their wives. Their offices are better run, their desks are neat; they can speak quietly and get action. For the most part they are better liked by their employees. The discipline is better, and so is the morale." They live well at home (all have maids), and better on the road. Their "... manners are precise and good, while the small-time president is likely to spread a whole slice of bread." They take fewer sleeping pills and less alcohol, but can sit down and have four drinks before dinner and never show it.

"In most cases it is not the wife who is doing the pushing to hard work: At least 75 per cent of the wives who are married to hard workers are unhappy. They never see their husbands. Unanimously, the wives agreed that they would prefer their daughters to marry some kid with less ambition. But the hard workers themselves are much happier than the lazy ones. If they had to choose between their wives and their jobs, they would take their jobs any time. They love the business luncheons and train compartments and long hours. They enjoy it all." 18

The breakdown of time among the ten American chief executives examined was as follows:

Representation	35%	}	Forecasting	5%
			Planning	5
Initiation	5		Organization	5
			Direction	10
Administration	60		Coordination	15
			Control	15
			Communication	5
Total	100%		Total	60%

Representation. It will be seen that representation is by far the most important function in terms of time devoted to it. An average of more than one-third of the total time available to these chief executives was spent on this function, including preparation for meetings, travel time, business luncheons, and contacts with the following types of persons:

1. Federal, state, and local officials
2. Customers
3. Suppliers
4. Personnel from other companies
5. Members of the board
6. Newspapermen
7. Technical specialists (consultants)
8. Bankers
9. Academic and research institutions
10. Personal business friends
11. Employers' association representatives
12. Trade-union officials
13. Persons interested in community, civic, and charitable affairs.

One of the companies that have always placed heavy emphasis on the representation function is IBM, whose long-time chief executive personified it. As far back as 1930, Thomas J. Watson counseled his employees to "... be outstanding citizens of your community and your country. That is as important as being a good man in business and besides it helps you to become a better man in your work." Many top executives are setting an example in representation. Thus a former president of the New York Telephone Company devoted part of every working day and three or four evenings a week to some dozen civic activities alone, apart from many other representational activities.

An American Management Association poll revealed that a

majority of 202 company presidents interviewed spent four or five hours a week in civic affairs—this in addition to the eighty or ninety hours they gave to company and other work. A General Motors study, “An Analysis of Participation in Plant, City and Community Activities,” by GM Divisional and Plant Executives, showed that 1,687 executives were active in 5,743 outside organizations—from chambers of commerce to the Young Men’s Christian Association.

The following more detailed analysis of the workweek of one of the ten executives studied by the authors, a bank president heading an organization of approximately five thousand employees, gives a clearer view of the time distribution:

<i>Time Spent with Bank Personnel</i>	<i>Hours</i>
Internal bank committees	9½
Executives of the bank	5
Economic research group	4½
Private secretaries	4½
Bank branch heads	1½
Chairman of the board	1½
Phone calls—internal	1
	<hr/> 27½

<i>Time Spent with Outsiders</i>	<i>Hours</i>
External committees	6½
Outside economists	5½
Outside bankers	5
Government officials	4¼
Customers	4
Preparing speeches	2
Social engagements (on business)	2
External phone calls	1
	<hr/> 30¼

Thus some 56.7 per cent of this president’s time was spent in seeing or preparing to see persons outside his organization.

This illustrates the predominant part played by public relations (representation) in his activities. These figures also suggest a correct, but unusual, attention to initiation (forecasting): the president devoted nearly 17 per cent of his time to discussions with his own assistant for economic research or with outside economists. On the other hand, he gave only 11 per cent of his time to individual discussions with his direct subordinates—executives and branch managers.

This president had a vice president in charge of administration, but the fact that he devoted 16.4 per cent of his time to internal bank committees suggests that this arrangement did not provide a complete or economical solution to the problem of coordination. It is also to be noted that this president had virtually no time to himself in a 57½-hour week, except for the time he devoted to preparation of speeches. In this instance, the figures certainly suggest that the chief should be relieved of some of the details of coordination so that he could spend more time on reflective thinking.

Carlson's comment on the failure of executives to realize that their new preoccupation with public and industrial relations has come to stay—and their failure to organize accordingly—has already been quoted. The bank president devoted more than 11 per cent of his time to outside committees and to fellow bankers.

Carlson has also noted another point¹⁷ about the executives he studied that is pertinent here:

A common feature was the low frequency of their contacts with customers and suppliers. While these contacts were generally delegated to other persons in the organizations according to a rational plan, there seemed to be no corresponding delegation with regard to the contacts which related to what might be called the firms' non-commercial activities, e.g., the representation of the firm vis-à-vis government offices, trade associations, and professional and welfare institutions. Many contacts that today are handled by the

chief executive himself could probably be taken care of just as efficiently by someone else in the organization.

It is probable that much more of a chief executive's work of outside representation can be delegated than is usually delegated at present. Many presidents appear to enjoy making speeches, or, if they dislike the actual process, they appreciate the prestige that accrues to the central figure on an important occasion. Those who are genuinely shy or have a real distaste for the limelight seem to manage to delegate such duties to others without apparent harm to their corporations.

Coordination. Next to representation, presidents whose work was analyzed devoted the largest percentage of their time to coordination. It is difficult to identify this function in terms of operational time. As R. A. Gordon has pointed out,¹⁸ it includes:

... some decision-making: establishing broad objectives, initiating and approving changes in key personnel and in management organization, approving decisions on various matters in terms of the approver's interpretation of broad objectives, approving decisions on specific matters to avoid conflicts with other decisions. It also includes two other elements: the exercise of personal leadership and the mere possession of authority. The latter gives cohesion to and maintains organization, but it does not involve any particular form of action.

In other words, as Mooney and Reiley¹⁹ emphasized more than twenty years ago, coordination is the

... first principle of organization. . . . This term expresses the principles of organization *in toto*; nothing less. . . . The internal objectives of organization are coordinative, always.

Because coordination has this over-all general significance, almost any conceivable act of management should contribute to unity of effort. Therefore many people think it is impossible to isolate the particular management acts that may be called

coordination. On the other hand, if adequate provision is not made for coordination in the day-to-day operations of any organization, fissile tendencies in human nature will tend to generate disunity. Much time and effort will have to be absorbed in correcting the result.

Coordination is, therefore, a function that all responsible chief executives should keep constantly in mind. Many other functions of management contribute to it—accurate planning, sound organization, clear direction, and so on; but unless the concept is isolated and viewed separately, it is unlikely to receive the constructive attention it merits.

Some of the rather naive enthusiasm devoted to communication in recent years may well be due to the fact that in the past business has been a little inclined to take coordination for granted. An adequate system of communication is, of course, essential to effective coordination. But that this should be treated as a new idea suggests that, in the past, some of the obvious symptoms of poor coordination have been treated as the inevitable weaknesses of man rather than as the avoidable consequences of weak management.

One such symptom is the proliferation of committees. The existence of a committee within the management group usually implies one of two things:

1. That an executive thinks that a committee is the most economical and effective method of collating the views of a variety of specialists. This may be so. But if the executive has had no experience with alternate methods, his view that a committee is the most effective lacks foundation.

2. That there is a lack of what the late Marshall Foch described as “mental discipline” among subordinate executives. They are, in fact, unwilling to accept a decision from higher authority even on quite minor administrative matters until they have had an opportunity to discuss it with others and

hear their own voices. Unquestionably it is desirable that consent and not force should be the basis of administration. But the assumption that discussion by a committee involves a greater degree of consent and a more tolerable employment of force for those who may dissent from the view of the majority than exploration of the issue with a sympathetic and considerate superior is again one which calls for proof. Obviously if superiors are forced to spend an undue proportion of their time on committee work, they will have insufficient time in which to maintain those contacts with individuals on which the willing acceptance of formal authority depends.

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² "Management Poll: Fortune Forum of Executive Opinion on U.S. Executives Themselves," *Fortune*, October, 1946.

³ Harper & Brothers, New York, 1945. One case cited by Professor Dimock (p. 154) is that of an executive "... who carried on his business by reducing everything to writing... Because of the daily storm of memoranda which blew throughout the organization, his employees spent a disproportionate share of their time preparing replies. The staff was so occupied in this way that it had to be increased in order to answer correspondence originating outside the organization. The enterprise became a mass of paperwork."

⁴ For example, O. F. Nolting, *Management Methods in City Government*, The International City Management Association, Chicago, 1942; Harold D. Lasswell, "Self-Observation: Recording the Focus of Attention," in *The Analysis of Political Behaviour: An Empirical Approach*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, Ltd., London, 1947, pp. 279-286; Comstock Glaser, *Administrative Procedure*, Public Affairs Press, Washington, D.C., 1941, pp. 32-36.

⁵ On this point cf. Carlson's comment, *op. cit.*, p. 52: "Even had the executives wanted to change their behaviour, they did not have much chance to do so. The content of their working day is determined only to a small extent by themselves, and it is difficult to change it without making considerable alterations in the organizational structure of which they are parts. . . . I always thought of a chief executive as the conductor of an orchestra, standing aloof on his platform. Now I am in some re-

spects inclined to see him as the puppet in a puppet-show with hundreds of people pulling the strings and forcing him to act in one way or another."

⁹ General Management Series, no. 165, American Management Association, New York, 1953, p. 15. The authors would like to emphasize that they make no claim to originality or finality in this analysis. In October, 1952, the Management Development Research Committee of the AMA, after considerable discussion, arrived at the following arrangement of what the executive does when he leads:

<i>Initiates</i>	<i>Administers</i>
1. Conceives	1. Forecasts
2. Recognizes	2. Plans
3. Visualizes	3. Organizes
4. Starts	4. Directs
	5. Coordinates
	6. Controls

⁷ *Leadership or Domination*, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, 1935, pp. 222-281.

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¹¹ Carlson, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹³ Nolting, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27.

¹⁴ Carlson, *op. cit.*, p. 27.

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¹⁶ *Ibid.* The basis of Talbott's conclusions on "happiness" is clear. But it is interesting to observe that a similar suggestion was put forward by a famous English novelist as long ago as 1912. Recounting a visit to the highly successful president of a great insurance corporation, the late Arnold Bennett wrote: "And what do you do with yourself in the evenings?" I inquired. He seemed a little disconcerted by this perhaps unaccustomed bluntness. 'Oh,' he said casually, 'I read insurance literature.'... The rough, broad difference between the American and the European business man is that the latter is anxious to leave his work, while the former is anxious to get to it. The attitude of the American business man toward his business is pre-eminently the attitude of an artist. . . . He loves his business. . . . He does not look forward to living

in the evening; he lives most intensely when he is in the midst of his organisation. . . . Watch American business men together, and if you are a European you will clearly perceive that they are devotees. . . . They are cemented by one religion—and it is not golf. For them the journey 'home' is often not the evening journey, but the morning journey. Call this a hard saying if you choose: it is true. Could a man be happy long away from a hobby so entrancing, a toy so intricate and marvellous, a setting so splendid?" (Arnold Bennett, *Those United States*, Martin Secker, London, 1912, pp. 119–122.)

¹⁷ Carlson, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

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4

Methods of Reducing Executive Burdens

Undoubtedly the burden of executive work is getting heavier. The causes are clearly apparent in the increasing size of enterprises, the rise in the number of specialized functions, the increase in the complexity of executive functions, the inexorable impact of outside responsibilities as the corporation becomes less private and more public, and the growing number of general and special interests which clamor for the executive's time. There is also the greater extension over time and space of business operations.

The consequences of increasing executive burdens are becoming more apparent also. At the least, they mean a reduction in attention to other values—those spiritual, family, community, hobby, and other occupations which are necessary to balanced living. Increasing executive burdens may also result in the well-known phenomena of reduced executive effectiveness, such as inadequate attention, superficiality, haste and impatience, and lowered morale among subordinates: The in-

dividual who feels himself under pressure is apt to develop various personal shortcomings. More serious are the adverse psychological and physical consequences which, unless steps are taken to counteract them, may and do lead to a premature waste of executive assets.

An obvious question arises, therefore: What can be done to reduce executive burdens? Apart from a strict limitation of over-all corporate activities, which may often be undesirable or even impossible, alternatives include delegation, committee management, and the use of officials in a *general* staff capacity.

Delegation

The most obvious and most widespread method of reducing executive burdens is clearly the delegation of responsibility and authority by the overburdened executive to subordinates. But the counsel of delegation may well be a counsel of perfection. Delegation, if it is to work successfully, must be complete; there is no halfway house.

Many chiefs are, of course, reluctant or unwilling to delegate. There may be sound economic reasons for their refusal, for delegation may be more expensive for a time. It requires, at the least, time and money for training, counseling, experimentation, and mistakes. It may also require additional personnel to ensure that the additional responsibilities are properly carried out. The chief may well be more competent than his subordinates for a long time, for he usually has more experience and is in a position (by dint of his authority assignment, status, and prestige) to be more effective in his decisions. The chief may not have an adequate system of controls, communication, and check points, or may even lack time to find out how the delegated responsibility is exercised.

But beyond the arguments against delegation that are wholly or largely rational from the economic point of view, there are a host of personal and irrational forces which obstruct it.

While it is not always fashionable to make reference to irrationality, it would be incorrect to overlook it. It is a vital, and sometimes overwhelming factor working against effective delegation. Of these irrational factors, the strongest is probably the chief executive's desire for power and the fact that he likes the feeling of exercising it; these sentiments are linked with the instinct for personal survival. Executives tend to be reluctant to delegate because they fear the lessening of their personal power and the actual or potential strengthening of possible rivals. Hence one observes that presidents move to the board chairmanship but continue to act as chief executives. They fear—and their fears are often well founded—that the younger men, their likely successors, wish to assume power as soon as they can. Therefore any reduction in their own power will push them that much faster toward a position of declining influence.

In other cases, the desire for power may be simply the result of lack of alternatives. Many chiefs find their full life's satisfaction in a full day's work at the office. Not atypical is what the first Lord Leverhulme wrote¹ about his work in relation to the interests of his life:

My happiness . . . is my business. I can see finality for myself, an end, an absolute end; but none for my business. There one has room to breathe, to grow, to expand, and the possibilities are boundless. One can go to places like the Congo, and organize, organize, organize, well, very big things indeed. But I don't work at business only for the sake of money. I am not a lover of money as money and never have been. I work at business because business is life. It enables me to do things.

When life and work are so identified, it is tempting to assume that there is no one to take over as an equally competent substitute; indeed men of this degree of dedication are rare. Delegation, therefore, is likely to be resisted. Alternative at-

tractions like Florida, stamps, alcohol, women, or even an ambassadorship to Luxembourg pale in comparison with the satisfactions of the job.

Socioeconomic tendencies have, in fact, restricted the range of alternative satisfactions open to the successful business executive. One is the shift from profit as the major business objective. This is partly the result of emphasizing personal rather than economic values in business, of stressing social rather than private responsibilities, of giving preference to professional rather than purely financial management. There are important economic reasons for this shift. Taxes and social changes have made the accumulation of great wealth much more difficult than it was two or even one generation ago. Hence the power and pleasure derived from great wealth have lessened. Gone are the days when Andrew Carnegie drew an annual salary of \$23 million from the presidency of the Carnegie Illinois Steel Corporation and all of it was take-home pay. The present president of that corporation, doing in many ways a more difficult job, is fortunate to retain $\frac{1}{10}$ of 1 per cent of the equivalent (in purchasing power). Hence it is not surprising that with the decline of financial rewards which made possible the exercise of many kinds of personal power, businessmen seek substitutes. One of these surely is the retention of decision-making power within the corporation. And that means a formal or *de facto* denial of delegation.

But even in the many and growing number of instances in which chiefs are tending toward increased delegation, subordinates are reluctant to accept the responsibility or to exercise the authority involved. Subordinates tend to or have been taught or persuaded to identify themselves with their superiors, even to the extent of being dependent on them for the direction of their activities. And the superior, by donning the "big brother" mantle ("it is expected that you see me before you act"—or "you better see me"), encourages this attitude. This

may be an obstacle to delegation much more important than is generally realized. Even very slight indications of this attitude on the part of the superior may obliterate any growth of the small seeds of independent responsibility in the subordinate. And for many subordinates a much more comfortable and even more secure road to advancement is to do exactly what the boss has told them to do or indicated that they should do. Some executives are said to advance largely or wholly by being the perfect "yes men" to their bosses.

And, of course, there are many genuine reasons why subordinates do not in fact accept or carry out additional responsibilities. Subordinates are reluctant to accept delegated responsibility when its scope and reasons are not clearly defined, when they are held accountable for errors over which they had no control, and when rewards are not tied to improved performance resulting from an increase in responsibilities.

Committees

Because delegation entails many obvious difficulties and since these cannot usually be overcome quickly (as is apparent from the length of time that most genuine programs of decentralization require for successful accomplishment—if we may equate delegation of decision making with decentralization), overburdened executives tend to turn to the use of committees as an alternative or supplement to delegation. The committee is envisaged as an organizational device which makes possible the development of policies and administrative devices superior to those which any one individual could develop by himself. It may also serve as a means of coordination, education, persuasion, and communication, and of review of the executive's plans and intentions; and, possibly, also as a means of appraisal. In all these and probably in other fields of leadership, committees can provide a great deal of help to the overburdened executive. Much of the development of

ideas, plans, and procedures can be undertaken by committees.

But, however helpful committees may be in reducing the executive's burdens, they can do so at best only to a limited degree. Committees cannot provide a substitute for individual leadership, and few employees would regard them as leaders. Committees also cannot execute; they are merely able to assign responsibility for execution. And while committee decisions may be superior in some respects, committee work is probably more time-consuming than individual action since differences of opinion may have to be ironed out. This in itself may be a long-range gain in terms of unity of action, but it does not really aid the executive with his major problem—the shortage of available time. The more nearly alike the committee members are in terms of job experience and ability and the greater the difference in outlook and personal ambition, the less effective the committee is likely to be and the less likely it is to lighten the executive's burden.

General Staff

There are obvious and important factors which prevent a sufficient lessening of executive burdens through delegation and committees. And even if this were not so, the burdens of the leadership functions inherent in the executive's job might be too great for him to handle alone. Because of the wide span of control that might be required, the burden could overwhelm him. When the number of staff functions multiply, when outside requests become more pressing, or when the time span and geographical spread of the business increase, the use of a *general* staff might well be considered as a means of making executive burdens bearable and the executive himself more effective. This may be briefly indicated here in a preliminary way.

The nature of the *general* staff assistant's area of respon-

sibility is normally the same as that of his superior or chief: He participates in his supervisor's responsibilities, but none is delegated to him personally as to a deputy. For example, if he is the assistant to the production manager, he participates in the responsibilities of his supervisor, the production manager, but certain responsibilities are not delegated to him specifically as they would be if he were deputy or assistant production manager.

Since the "assistant-to," or staff assistant, cannot delegate, none of his chief's immediate subordinates owes any responsibility to him. He may have an assistant staff officer or clerical help immediately responsible to him, but they are merely extensions of his staff functions.

The assistant helps his chief in his work. He has been well described as "an extension of his chief's personality," whose job it is to "worry about the problems which worry the boss." The "chief" may be a line executive or a staff specialist, or he may be the company president. In this discussion, we shall deal principally with the functions of the assistant to the chief executive, i.e., to the president.

The assistant's status is below that of other executives reporting to his chief or supervised by him. It cannot be overstressed that there should be no dilution of responsibility through the assistant. As one top executive describes his function: "We believe that the chief executive officer should not surround himself with any assistants who in any way diminish the responsibility of the other chief officers of the company. The assistant should not presume to pass judgment in any way on any of the principal officers, since it discourages them and makes judgment on their promotion difficult. If he criticizes his chief's subordinates who are his superiors in status, it is the assertion of an authority which he does not possess; and if he criticizes any of their subordinates, he is criticizing them. Further, he is interfering with his chief's authority."

Qualifications for Successful Staff Assistants. The staff assistant requires technical competence, discretion, high analytical powers, and ability to present his material effectively in speech and in writing. He must unfold his activities slowly to begin with and win confidence. He should be free from organization politics and give his views on the basis of the merits of the problems. He must gain top management support, so that his efforts may bear fruit. It is almost essential that he should have held a managerial position of an ordinary executive character with success and thus have won the respect of the organization. (Many of the failures in the use of staff assistants can be traced to neglect of this precaution. Armies do not use newly joined second lieutenants as general staff officers.) He must be able to "live with" his superior successfully and have a good sense of timing.

On their part, line executives must learn how to use staff assistants. This requires, among other things, the ability to listen and a real willingness to leave to staff assistants all work of a clerical character. "Desk-bound" executives are quite as great a danger to their organizations as are "chair-borne" generals.

Possible Activities of Staff Assistants.² The activities of staff assistants in business vary in importance from the equivalent of those of an office boy up to activities of a vice-presidential nature. But if they are in the former category, they are not properly the activities of a general staff officer: They are those of a male secretary or aide-de-camp. Major activities may include, in rough order of importance:

1. Coordinating work by bringing together the parties concerned, clarifying misunderstandings, collecting and disseminating information, acting as secretary for coordinating committees.

2. Collecting, analyzing, writing up top management policies, plans, and procedures.

3. Economic and market research, study of competitive conditions, governmental regulations.

4. Screening visitors and requests to the chief executive or top management.

Minor activities may include:

1. Design of management control reports.

2. Design and installation of inter-departmental procedures, leaving intra-departmental procedures to be handled by departmental staffs.

3. Plans for reorganization, analysis, preparation of recommendations, preparation of organization manuals and charts and keeping them up-to-date.

4. Part-time functions like public relations or personnel activities, in smaller firms. The staff assistant may not exercise these functions himself but may merely see to it that they are properly carried out.

5. Working out and suggesting methods of office improvement; control over internal reporting systems, forms, space, and office equipment. (These functions are, of course, frequently performed by the controller, purchasing director, office manager, or industrial engineer.)

In connection with these activities, two different types of assistants-to must be distinguished. One type performs a function not performed anywhere else. The other type performs a function which is being carried out elsewhere. For example, if a company officer has an assistant to do economic research and no such work is being done anywhere else in the company, there is no problem of duplication. However, if there is a department of economic research in the company and the president has an assistant to go over the material produced by that department, dispute and confusion may result from the lack of clear-cut responsibility.

Advantages. The advantages to the chief executive or a top vice president of having an assistant include:

1. Reduction of the burden of work. This may make it possible for the chief executive to see people, to do some quiet thinking, to extend his span of control (if necessary) or to supervise his present subordinates more satisfactorily, to supplement his technical competence with administrative and human relations competence.

2. An improvement in planning and coordination.

3. Better utilization and continued application of outside counsel.

4. Training for the assistant so that he may acquire an over-all point of view of the company's affairs, learn how to persuade others, have the opportunity to observe and to be observed, and ultimately, perhaps, be in a position to take over a managerial function.

Staff assistants may be particularly helpful (though this is not necessarily the case) in small firms, under rapidly changing conditions (increase in company size, seasonal and erratic fluctuations), in geographically dispersed enterprises, in organizations having long chains of command, in situations in which the line executive is newly appointed—especially if he is revitalizing an established company. At his best, the staff assistant develops analytical ability, practical application, sincerity, and enthusiasm for the company to a point where all his actions make him an asset to his superior and to the company.

Disadvantages. Among the disadvantages of having “assistants-to” is the confusion which frequently occurs regarding the nature of their responsibilities. There is also the danger that the assistant may substitute his personal opinions instead of representing his chief's views—for example, he may put obstacles in the way of the chief's seeing individuals whom he really wants to see. Line men may resent advice from someone who is their junior in status (and probably age). Such matters as executive job evaluation and reorganization can-

not be wholly entrusted to the assistant-to, if he is at all involved in, or susceptible to, company politics. Moreover, there is a danger that the assistant may have more access to the boss than the "doers" or line executives who are out performing their jobs. Worst of all, perhaps, a businessman may be deluded into believing that his capacity for decision making is multiplied in proportion to the number of assistants working under him.

Some feel that the training afforded by service as a staff assistant can be better provided through rotation, staff meetings, and personal-development plans. The opposition to the assistant-to centers especially on the objection that the assistant too often becomes the executive's interpreter, confidant, companion, errand boy, paper dispatcher, informal contact man, spy, or whipping boy, or assumes the role of the "grey eminence behind the throne."

For these reasons a number of companies avoid the appointment of an assistant-to or even an assistant manager (who takes over some of the responsibilities of the manager) unless the appointment is clearly temporary and made primarily for training purposes. Some maintain that a good secretary can render most of the services performed by the assistant-to without giving rise to many of the problems of relationship mentioned above.

The issue between the proponents and opponents of the assistant-to is sharply drawn. The choice depends on the individual case, with due consideration of past company experience, economic feasibility, and the personalities involved. But it is essential that the duties and responsibilities of the assistant and his relations to his chief and to his chief's subordinates should be clearly understood by all concerned. In other words, the chief should have a clear concept of the nature of "staff work" of different kinds and of the special character of the relationships involved.

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¹ Charles Wilson, *The History of Unilever*, Cassell & Co., Ltd., London, 1954, vol. I, p. 187.

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5

The Military Use of Staff

While business has adopted the words *staff* and *line* from military terminology, it has shown insufficient insight into the realities those terms are used to describe. In consequence there has been almost endless confusion and conflict about the part that so-called “staff” positions are supposed to play in business organizations. Definitions of *staff* given by authorities on business management often tend to be vague, contradictory, and lacking in precision. The setting up of staff positions in practice has too frequently been accompanied by disputes about competence and authority, which have often led to the discrediting, if not the dismissal, of able and enthusiastic younger executives. Communication in business—and it is to the system of authentic communication that the word *line* really refers—is still far less precise and orderly than it is in the combat forces. In short, business has taken over from the military nothing but the words. It is still making its own somewhat elementary and painful experiments with the problems of human relations involved in line and staff relations.

Prejudice Against the Military—Historical Background

In English-speaking countries there is a prejudice against militarism, and the feeling has deep historic roots. It inhibits businessmen who have not had direct personal experience with military staff organization *in war* from understanding military practice. They find it difficult to make the adaptations necessary to their own environments, even where such organization is applicable.

In Great Britain. In Great Britain, this prejudice dates from Cromwell's time. As Sir John Fortescue, the historian of the British Army, wrote ¹ of the Protector's experiments in governing the country through major generals in command of districts: "The memory of their dictatorship burned itself deep into the heart of the nation, and even now, after two centuries and a half, the vengeance of the nation on the soldier remains insatiate and insatiable."

"No standing army" became the watchword of the politicians. When Great Britain became engaged in one of its numerous wars, extra regiments were hastily raised and even more hastily disbanded. Thousands of veterans were left to roam the countryside, picking up a living as best they could. There was no national system of pensions, little or no effort on the part of government to train the soldiers for other employment. Inevitably they added to people's prejudice against the Army. "Marlborough's troops marched from victory to victory, and returned to be cursed as the plague of the nation."²

Moreover, for more than two centuries the British Army was raised under the system of purchase. Colonels bought the command of regiments as a business speculation. Effects of this were evident in the Crimean War, possibly the worst-managed military enterprise in which the country had ever engaged.

And while the blunders brought the dawn of more profes-

sional standards of organization and training for the regular army, the Boer War, half a century later, gave rise to a new crop of scandals. It was not until 1906, under Richard Burdon Haldane (later Lord Haldane of Cloan) as Secretary of State for War, that professional education became a requisite for Army leaders. The test of what had been accomplished was the performance of the first six divisions that crossed to France in 1914. A high-ranking German staff officer who knew his business pronounced that little army "... a perfect thing apart."

In the United States. The strong popular feeling that military people are necessarily rigid and incompetent was transferred from Great Britain to the United States, and the War of Independence strengthened it. The American Revolution was essentially a struggle of individuals—frontiersmen, sharpshooters—against disciplined, professional troops who found difficulty in adapting the traditional close-order drill to conditions in the new country. British military leadership achieved depths of inertia and ineptitude hardly credible, especially in the light of the later careers of some of the generals concerned.³ Responsible American historians have since suggested that the British Commander in Chief himself was averse from an outright victory.⁴

An influence making for distrust of military forms of organization among businessmen in particular may have been the writings of Frederick Winslow Taylor, "the father of scientific management."

Taylor was struck by the immense variety of skills and qualities demanded of the average foreman around the turn of the century. So he developed what he described as "functional foremanship," an arrangement under which each worker was responsible to eight foremen, each of whom dealt with a different function. At the same time he described the earlier form of organization that he was trying to displace as "military."⁵

Taylor's functional foremanship has been the least imitated of his devices. Specialization in the task of supervision involves a lowering of emphasis on the corresponding need for coordination. There is evidence that, in the smaller shops in which Taylor used this device initially, there was some margin of coordinating capacity, but when he applied it to larger shops, especially those where two levels of specialization were required, difficulties occurred.⁶

In using "military" as descriptive of the form of organization he was trying to displace, Taylor was thinking about two different things: organization, or the structure of authentic communication, and the way in which authority is exercised. He repeatedly emphasized the need for a change of attitude on the part of foremen. The authoritative approach ("You do what I tell you because I tell you to do it"), traditional in his time, was to be replaced by an attitude resembling that of a good teacher⁷ ("We both want you to be able to turn out more work more easily. Let me help you"). It was around the question of attitude, so much more difficult to express clearly or change quickly than methods and systems, that much of the earlier controversy about scientific management centered. Taylor himself maintained clearly and consistently that unless there was an alteration in attitude and spirit as well as in methods, "Scientific management cannot be said to exist in any establishment."⁸

Taylor had a very strong dislike of the authoritarianism and rigidity of the Prussian military code of the nineteenth century. When sixteen he had been in Berlin with his parents during the Franco-Prussian War. As a younger child he had experienced the Civil War. He shared with the present generation the horror felt by every person of intelligence at the thought of war as a means of settling human differences. But he was innocent of any direct experience with the military organization of his own or any other democratic country.

Had he had such direct experience, he would have realized that military organization faces exactly the same problem that business organizations do in incorporating new forms of specialized knowledge at the point of action, though its solution differs from that commonly found in business, because experience has made it more sensitive to the need for maintaining a clear-cut system of communication. But this is a requirement common to both forms of organization, quite separate and distinct from the need in military operations for an authoritarian and rigid code of discipline. The military commander in a modern army, even at a level corresponding to that of the foreman in industry, makes use of all kinds of specialized assistance. In describing as "military" the system, common in American machine shops in the 1880's, by which the foreman was a Jack-of-all-trades, Taylor was inaccurate. What was in his mind was the authoritarian character of military discipline rather than a form of military organization with which he had little acquaintance.

By using this term, however, Taylor reinforced the prejudice against military forms of organization in American business. At the same time, by suggesting the functional form of organization, which slurred over the question of coordination, he distracted attention from what is, probably, the most serious problem of organization in American business today. It is a curious fact that, while his system of functional foremanship has been little imitated at the shop-floor level, it has become an almost universal model for the highest level of organization in industrial enterprises.

Other Reasons for Prejudice

Apart from the historical causes of prejudices against militarism that have been sketched briefly, it is in any event extremely difficult for the citizen of a free society to understand how military organization works unless he has had direct ex-

perience with it *in war and actually as a staff officer in the field.*

In peacetime an army, any army, is necessarily part of the governmental machinery of the country concerned. It is subject to ⁹

... the stupefying complexity of government procedure, the over-centralization and the multiplicity of "clearances" and approvals required before anything can be done, [which] have bred intolerable delays, jurisdictional rows, and the practice of "passing the buck."

Its personnel constitute a bureaucracy. They are driven by these same influences that have, throughout history, tended to make bureaucracies inhuman and inefficient and businessmen rightly suspicious of them.

Centralization at the national capital or within a business undertaking always glorifies the importance of pieces of paper. This dims the sense of reality. . . . The reason why there is and always has been so much bureaucratic spirit, such organizational intrigue, so much pathologic personal ambition, so many burning jealousies and vendettas in a capital city (any capital city, not only Washington) is no mystery. The facts with which a highly centralized institution deals tend to be the men and women of that institution itself, and their ideas and ambitions. To maintain perspective and human understanding in the atmosphere of centralization is a task that many able and conscientious people have found well-nigh impossible. Making decisions from papers has a dehumanizing effect. Much of man's inhumanity to man is explained by it.¹⁰

Moreover, armies in peacetime work under conditions which are peculiarly divorced from reality. They are spending public money, not for any object that anyone can conceivably desire, but as an insurance against an eventuality that every wise man hopes may be avoided. Military leaders in peace are in the position of an actor rehearsing on an empty stage for a wide variety of performances. No play has been written out in full. Each is but a barnstormer's sketch of the characters which may

be involved and of the possible outline of the action. Awaiting them in the theater is an audience of their compatriots whose one hope is that they may be spared the spectacle of the melodrama whatever it is, that the safety curtain will remain down.

When and if the safety curtain is raised, those whom their compatriots usually see and with whom they have business are not the professional actors who have been rehearsing so long. The cast is suddenly enlarged, five- or tenfold, from the audience. The best of the trained soldiers are away doing the fighting. The businessman meets his opposite number, hastily thrust into uniform and, as almost always occurs in such instances, somewhat uncertain of himself in his new role. Such amateurs tend to emphasize the forms of professional practice while ignoring its spirit. They rely on ranks and regulations, unconscious that to the best type of professional officer the man who has to "pull rank" is telling the world that he has not got what rank takes and that the chair-borne general with his nose in regulations is confessing that he lacks the leadership to deal with actual situations.¹¹

The man who has actually served in the army is likely to, be biased against the staff, particularly if his military service has been at home. While the soldier is, fortunately, seldom able to put his peacetime training to the test of reality, competitive business is continuously on active service. For reasons already given, the climate of action in any army in time of peace is no model for any business. It is only in an army at war, and in an army which has been at war for some time, that the basic principles of military organization deposited by centuries of experience can be seen at work, unhampered by the fatty excrescences of peacetime public administration—and then, usually, only in an army in the field. At home, amid the bureaus and departments, surrounded by officials convinced that the customs of their calling will survive the emergencies

of war, only the strongest personalities among the soldiers can slough off the procedural network in which they are enmeshed.

Even if a man has served in the field, but only in combat units, he may well share that somewhat jaundiced view of staff officers and staff duties common among the line in all forms of human organization.

It is therefore, probably, only the businessman who has served in an army on the staff in the field who has any clear idea of the way in which military organization works. And even he may not have been interested in organization; he may merely have accepted the military pattern without inquiring into the why and the wherefore of various arrangements and relationships.

In the democratic countries it is, however, the precision and pervasiveness of military discipline that probably account for most of the feeling against military organization. But, as was pointed out above, in discussing the views of F. W. Taylor, organization in the sense of the structure of authentic communication and the way in which authority is exercised are not the same things. In an army at war, discipline must follow a more precise pattern than is either necessary or desirable in business. Because an army in peacetime is preparing for war, the same disciplinary pattern has to be observed. But it does not follow that, because business draws on military experience of organization, it must necessarily adopt the military code of discipline. To attempt to do so would be absurd. The two callings are quite different.

Thus, once an officer or a man is enlisted, he cannot leave the service at all. While he remains in it, disobedience, haggling, or even mere contrariness¹² can get him into trouble. Nor can he refuse a responsibility or assignment.

Business discipline is less formalized and less exacting. Theoretically the individual remains a free agent. True, he can be fired if he refuses to do what is asked of him and even, in

some old-fashioned undertakings, because his foreman happens to dislike him. In times of depression this can be a more severe penalty than can be awarded in a modern army save after the judicial process of a court-martial, and then only for a serious offense duly proved. But in business the individual is often protected by his trade union, and always by his ability to quit. In an army, if he once becomes thoroughly disgruntled or uncooperative, he can attract very serious penalties, penalties which, since military discipline is legally enforceable, may carry the stigma of a substantial prison sentence. In the daily details of life—dress, cleanliness, behavior, and so on—the soldier is compelled to adhere to precise and sometimes irritating standards. Further, since soldiering is a way of life, these irritations are much more persistent and continuous than is the discipline of the factory. The young worker can escape to his home or to his amusements; at the end of the day he is a free and independent citizen once more. The young soldier in barracks or active service cannot do so. The voice of the sergeant is a continuous affair, round the clock and seven days a week.

The rigid and quasi-automatic character of military discipline, to which many persons unaccustomed to it take such strong exception, is not an accident. It is not imposed because those in authority like the exercise of authority. It is imposed because of two special conditions to be found in war, conditions not present in more peaceful avocations. Since a peacetime army is preparing for war, the habit of obedience to orders is cultivated in peacetime; it cannot be suddenly inculcated in men accustomed to other methods and other standards.

The first of these special conditions is fear. With very, very few exceptions every individual exposed to enemy action is afraid. It is his duty to conquer that fear and to go forward with the task allotted to him in spite of it. But his personal

capacity to do so is greatly reinforced by the habits of quasi-automatic obedience to orders and of group action inculcated by drill and by military discipline in general. Even when the individual is isolated, he still feels a part of his group. If in the stress of battle he feels inclined to look after his own safety or even to run away, he is ashamed to be the first to do so. He assumes that the others will stay put, and so he stays put too. If he begins to look over his shoulder, the voice of a sergeant reminds him that there are no orders to retire. The habit of discipline comes to the help of a personal courage that may be unequal to the strains imposed on it.

The second of these special conditions is lack of time. As a general rule military operations are carried out in circumstances which render the time factor of crucial importance. In war there is seldom time to explain the reasons for instructions or to question their validity. In many situations this is obvious. To put a thousand airplanes over a restricted and not too clearly defined target in darkness and cloud, to direct two or three hundred armored fighting vehicles in an attack over scores of miles of desert are exercises in which the least hesitation by even one unit of the total force may spell confusion and disaster. Split-second obedience to orders is essential to successful command. Even the more mundane operations which make up so large a proportion of any war do not allow much scope for hesitation or argument. To move, feed, clothe, and shelter large masses of men in strange or hostile country involves administrative problems which leave small margins for error and deviation from plan. Quite small failures in personal cleanliness or in sanitary precautions may precipitate crippling epidemics.

In business in time of peace neither of these special conditions prevails. There is no physical fear. There is usually time to thrash out differences of view or emphasis and to see that everyone concerned is thoroughly informed of the reasons for

any proposed course of action. Where time is available, it is sheer stupidity not to take advantage of it. Men can always cooperate better if they understand the reasons for any prescribed course of action. Modern military commanders place great emphasis on the importance of "putting men in the picture."

The importance of the time factor in war also leads to another difference. While great emphasis is laid in armies on strict obedience to orders, almost equal weight is attached to the importance of having the "man on the spot," the commander of even the smallest unit, assume full responsibility for the safety of his unit and for taking action appropriate to any circumstances in which he may find himself. It is generally accepted that a distant headquarters cannot know the details of a local situation half as well as the officer facing the enemy at that point. Thus, within the framework of a strict insistence on discipline, there is also, in modern war, equal emphasis on the importance of proper delegation. An officer is expected to ask for instructions only if he needs them and there is time for them to reach him. If not, he is expected to act on his own responsibility.

Moreover, since modern war leads to casualties, organization is a structure of positions rather than of persons. Where a rapid and fairly constant turnover of personnel is anticipated, standard operating procedures are essential. The command of a subordinate unit may pass to half a dozen different people in the course of a day's fighting. If cohesion is to be preserved and disruption avoided, this passing of command and of corresponding responsibility must be provided for automatically. This explains the emphasis on seniority in a particular rank usually found in military organization. If the colonel is dead, the command passes automatically to the next senior officer; if all the officers are dead, to the senior noncommissioned officer, and so on.

Understanding, NOT Imitation

In the light of these many differences in conditions, to suggest that business should attempt to adopt the general staff concept as developed in armies *in toto* would be extremely unwise. Even if the same conditions prevailed in the two occupations, a mere transfer of duties and procedures from the one to the other would be likely to cause more grief than gain. The satisfactory working of the various kinds of staff relationships found in armies is the outcome of an evolution extending over centuries. Military history is strewn with examples of misunderstanding of these relations and of consequent disaster. Any attempt at mere imitation by business enterprises would encounter the same difficulties, but in an exaggerated form.

It can scarcely be denied, however, that business undertakings have problems of formal organization, that is to say, of communication. In speaking and writing about them, students of management frequently employ terms borrowed from military practice; the most common of these are *staff*, *staff and line*, and, less frequently, *the chain of command*. What is submitted is that these military terms are used inaccurately and with an insufficient understanding of the military practices to which they refer.

Over the course of the last half century some of these inaccuracies and misunderstandings have become, as it were, an accepted part of the theory of business organization. Because terms have been used incorrectly, business practice has suffered. In particular the use of *assistants to* high executives has become enmeshed in controversy and doubt. As a result business executives have been handicapped in taking proper steps to unload the increasing burden of work and responsibility that progressive specialization and the growth of business enterprises under single control have thrown upon their

shoulders. Squabbles between different categories of specialists about authority and competence have tended to increase. Executive development has been hampered by lack of positions in which rising young specialists destined for high responsibility can learn to take a generalized view while their minds are still relatively young and flexible.

All that is suggested is that, for these reasons, the time has come when business should take a fresh look at these military terms it has so freely misinterpreted and at the practices which they represent. It should attempt to do so without bias due to the historic prejudice against military organization and military discipline outlined in the first part of this chapter. It should do this, not with a view to imitating military practice, but rather to clarify the terminology which writers on management themselves employ and to assist business leaders to a clearer understanding of the organizational problems that have arisen in the course of their own experience.

The Problem of Communication

All forms of human government—that is to say, all human systems of cooperation—may be described as operating at two levels: (1) the political or legislative level, where decisions are made on what is to be done, and (2) the executive level, where the policies laid down at the political level are carried out. Both in theory and in corporation law, a distinction is made between the two. Political problems and the ultimate control of the executive are the responsibility of the board of directors; the carrying out of the broad policies determined by the board is the function of the chief executive and his subordinates.

In practice, because of what has been described¹³ as “the gradual erosion of the board of directors as a functioning organ of the enterprise,” there is some confusion between policy-making, or political, functions and executive functions.

The reason for this has been stated in unambiguous terms: ¹⁴ "It is in the process of defining, with skill and sense, *what* is to be done, and with it *the fixing of responsibility* for results, with wide freedom for judgment in the managers as to *how* it may best be done, that you have the essence of the best modern management."

Where one individual is held clearly and definitely responsible to the political authority for executive action, the two concepts can be kept distinct, and individuals in the executive structure can be held immune from the infection of political influences. Where much of the policy making is delegated by default to the group of principal executives, it is more difficult to keep the two functions segregated and distinct in the minds of all concerned.

The main reason why it is desirable to do so is that human groups differ widely in their capacity for two kinds of processes—thinking and acting. For thinking on broad policies a group can be better than an individual: "Two heads are better than one." But when it comes to translating that thinking into combined action, individual leadership becomes essential. This is so for two quite simple reasons: (1) individuals remain individuals, and as soon as a group breaks up so that the individuals composing it may act, their differences begin to assert themselves; and (2) cohesive action by individual members of a group postulates extremely accurate timing. Such accuracy of timing is unattainable by spontaneous individual action.

There are, in fact, extremely few *actions* which a group of people can take together conveniently. What they can do is to *think* together. The product of their thought is reduced to words which express the intention of the group. The group then breaks up into its individual components; as a group it ceases for the time being to exist. But words are by no means perfect instruments of communication. Each member of the group begins to interpret the expression of intention in the

light of his own personal idiosyncrasies: One emphasizes one aspect of the intention, another an alternative aspect. *This is bound to happen*, even where all the members are honestly trying their utmost to carry out the group intention, *merely because they are different individuals*. Because the group has broken up, it has for the time being ceased to exist as a group, and there is no one who can resolve difficulties by giving a common interpretation of the intention.

The problem of timing can be illustrated by a tug-of-war team. Eight people are trying to perform an extremely simple and uniform act together, viz., pulling on a rope. They cannot do so effectively unless someone, an "anchor man" or coach, sets the time. Without this timing the efforts of individuals become slightly syncopated, unsynchronized. The full effort of the whole team, as a team, is never exerted quite simultaneously. There is a loss of cohesion or, in industrial terms, of productivity.

Thus when a group of people attempt to *act* together, it is desirable that an individual be assigned the tasks of interpreting the group intention and setting the time. These are two of the main executive functions. However, in more complex group efforts, individuals are not, as in the example of the tug-of-war team, within sight and sound of the coach or anchor man. Thus the successful discharge of these functions depends very largely on speed, accuracy, and acceptability of communications.

Barnard has said that the need of a definite system of communication creates the first task of the organizer and is the immediate origin of executive organization¹⁵ and that the function of executives is to serve as channels of communication, so far as communications must pass through central positions.¹⁶

The basic executive function is to maintain the system of cooperative effort in being. Such a system is impersonal. Its

structure is a structure of positions, not of people, and the form of that structure depends ultimately on techniques of communication. How far, in Barnard's phrase, should communications "pass through central positions"?

Let us consider for a moment the situation illustrated in Figure 4. We have twelve positions which need to communicate with each other on the average twice each way each day. Four of them are operating positions; the remaining eight are functional specialties of various kinds. (This is a situation by no means uncommon at the top of large business corporations.)

PATTERN OF COMMUNICATION - NO CLEARING HOUSE

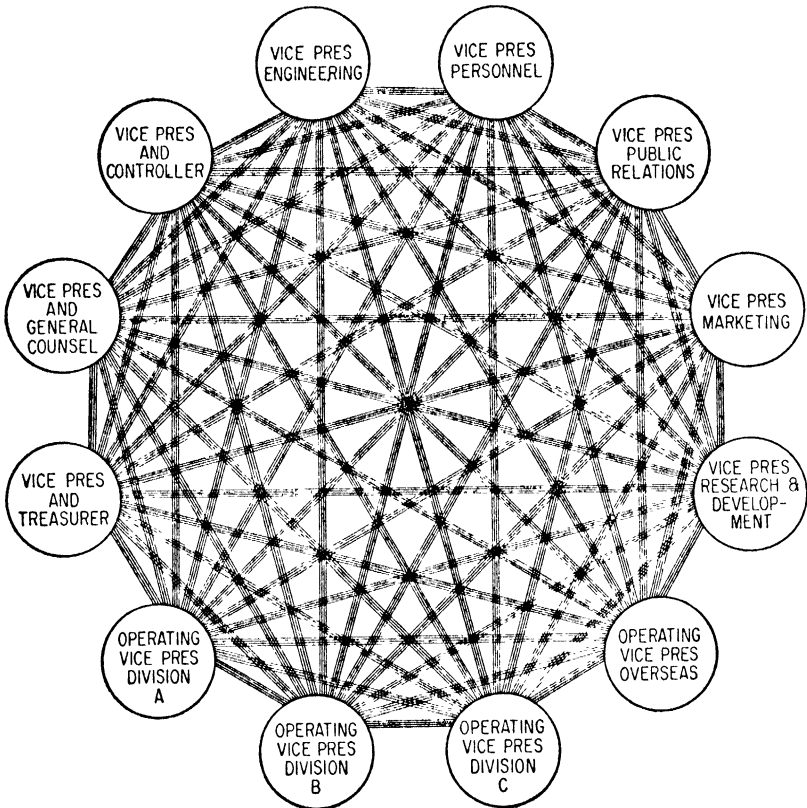


Figure 4

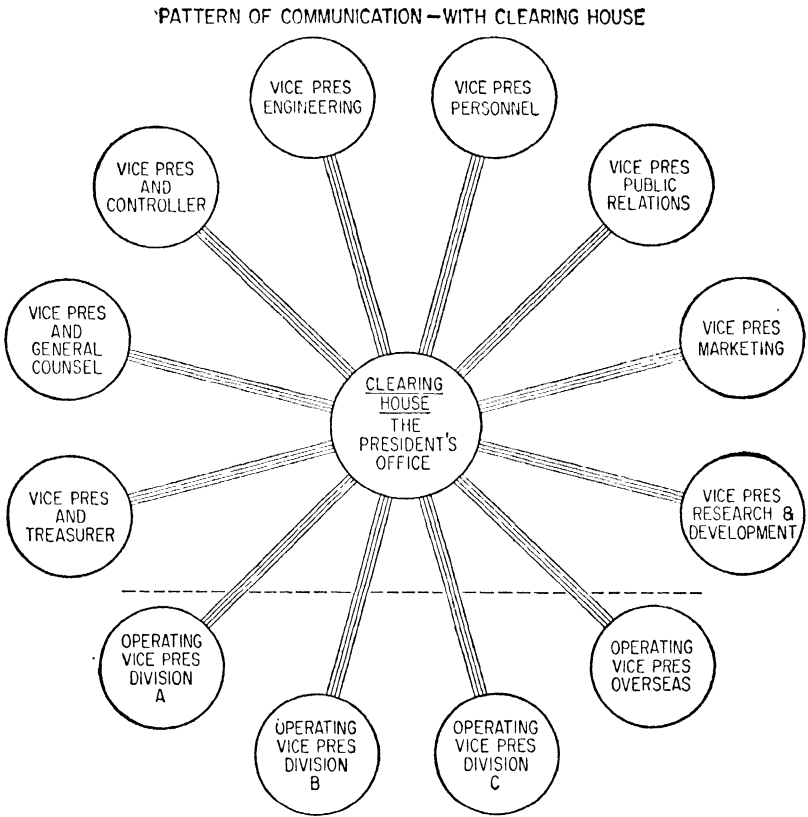
If there is no central clearinghouse, or if the person occupying the central position of authority does not act as such, the persons occupying these twelve positions will be left to coordinate their actions for themselves. The pattern of communications between them will be as shown. This arrangement is uneconomic, unsystematic, liable to error, and potentially disruptive.

It is uneconomic because each of the twelve positions shown in Figure 4 must maintain machinery for communicating with the other eleven positions, its own duplicating arrangements, messenger system, and so on. It is unsystematic because no principle is established to govern which communications should go only to one other position, which to two or three other positions, and which to all the other eleven. The individual incumbents must decide who should be informed of any proposed action. It is liable to error because the more tasks become specialized, the less are individuals able to appreciate completely the possible effects of projects or information which they may initiate on the working of other functions. It is potentially disruptive because individuals who are not informed on courses of action that affect the discharge of their duties or are informed too late are very apt to attribute the mistake to positive ill will or to deliberate sabotage.

The Clearinghouse Principle. Where, however, a clearinghouse is established, as in Figure 5, the whole problem of communication is much simplified. One position becomes responsible for seeing that all other positions are notified *in time* of any information, change of plan, action, etc., which may affect them. One set of duplicating arrangements and one messenger service are enough. Standard lists of positions requiring different types of information can be drawn up and adhered to. If a position does not receive essential information in time, the incumbent is less likely to conclude that he is being attacked personally. It is the duty of the clearinghouse position to secure coordination.

But, and it is a big *but*, the use of such a clearinghouse position involves the concept of authority. As Barnard has pointed out, every communication should be *authenticated*. This means that: ¹⁷

1. The person communicating must be known actually to occupy the "position of authority" [clearinghouse position] concerned.
2. The position includes the type of communication concerned, that is, it is "within its authority."



Vice-presidents below the dotted line are "operating," i.e. their offices should act as clearing-houses at Level II.

Figure 5

3. [The communication] actually is an authorized communication from this office.

Business Tradition Opposed to a Formal System of Communication. It is only within this century that the really large-scale undertaking has become typical in business. In the small workshop, representative through many centuries of a handicraft economy, everyone in a given business was close together, and communication presented few problems. Even in the more compact undertaking of the earlier industrial revolution, things were not too difficult. Always provided that (1) specialists do not become too numerous, (2) everyone is more or less in the same place, so that immediate personal contact is quick and easy, (3) personnel do not have individual or functional interests which conflict, (4) there are reserves of coordinating capacity which can be brought to bear if conflicts do occur, and (5) the personnel concerned are accustomed to working together, then reasonable communications can be maintained.

The tradition of business is, therefore, in favor of comparatively free and easy arrangements for communication. Jobs are assigned to individuals, and they are left to "rub along together" as best they can. It is assumed that collaboration will be forthcoming.

Where, however, as the result of growth, the number of different levels in an undertaking is multiplied and, at the same time, the degree and variety of specialization are increased, the problem becomes much more complex. And this is precisely what has occurred in business over the last half century.

The Problem of Levels. The situation illustrated in Figures 4 and 5 dealt merely with communication between a number of people *at the same level*. Figure 5 showed the great advantage of a clearinghouse in simplifying and systematizing communications even in such circumstances. But as soon as more than one level has to be considered, the whole situation

becomes more intricate, particularly if there are specialists of the same type at different levels. The possibility of disputes over authority and competence is much increased.

Who, for instance, should communicate with a specialized accountant in the second level of an organization? Common sense would seem to suggest that the specialized accountant at the first level should have the right to do so. But if he starts to send authentic communications to an accountant at the second level, he is bypassing two clearinghouses—that at his own level and that at the level at which the recipient is operating. And, if a clearinghouse is bypassed, it ceases to be the nodal point of action and information at its level, and its capacity for coordination evaporates. The task of reconciling possibly conflicting instructions and information is thrown on the shoulders of subordinates.

Figure 6 shows a segment of an organization chart extending a portion of Figure 5 to lower levels. On it are shown correct and incorrect lines of communication from a specialist at one level to a corresponding specialist at a lower level or to an operating manager on the same level. In all such instances the specialist's communication should move through the clearinghouse or clearinghouses concerned, *not directly* to a specialist at a lower level or to a clearinghouse at a lower level.

The Chain of Command. The principle here illustrated is that described in military terminology as *the chain of command*. Again we have a word, *command*, which has an authoritarian flavor. Clearinghouses, however, are a necessity of systematic communication. The requirement that all authentic communications should pass through them in no way implies that those communications should be authoritarian in tone or in intention.

Moreover, such a precise structure of authentic communications channels does not imply that there are no others. In fact, there is a fairly constant stream of communication in armies between specialists at one level and corresponding

COMMUNICATION AT DIFFERENT LEVELS—THE CHAIN OF COMMAND

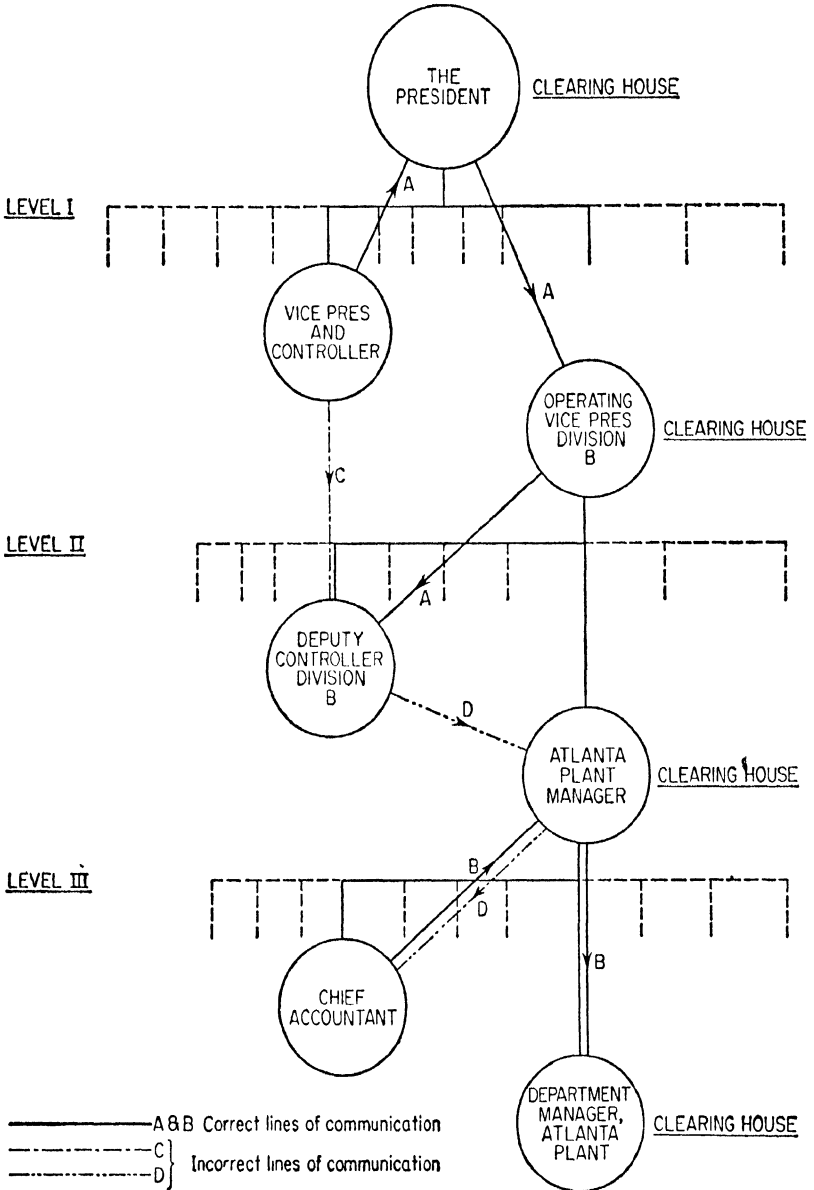


Figure 6

specialists at lower levels, particularly on technical matters or points concerning the internal administration of that particular corps of specialists. But it is a firmly established principle that such communications must not in any way interfere with the chain of command. That is to say, they must not be of such a nature as to affect the coordinated action of individuals in response to authentic communications received through the clearinghouse of the level at which they are operating.

This principle is usually safeguarded by the practice of sending copies of all such technical and specialized communications to the clearinghouses of all levels within which specialized personnel receiving the original communications are operating. The technical content of such specialized communications may be of little interest to the clearinghouse concerned. But the fact that a copy has been submitted is evidence that the specialized authority issuing it is not attempting to bypass the system of authentic communications, i.e., the chain of command. On the other hand, failure by a specialist to submit a copy of any communication to the appropriate clearinghouse creates a presumption that, owing to negligence or intent, he is bypassing the chain of command. However little interested the clearinghouses might be in the technical content of such documents, the omission would be noted.

Precise Communication too Formalistic? This care in establishing and maintaining in somewhat minute detail a system of authentic communications often appears to those not conversant with its advantages unnecessarily formalistic and time-consuming. But it is open to question whether, with the increasing size of business undertakings under unified control and the necessity for the employment of an ever-expanding range of highly qualified specialists, business can afford not to be meticulous about its systems of communication. Unquestionably misunderstandings and errors due to faulty communications do occur and are extremely costly. Moreover, efforts to

ensure communication and coordination along more personal lines, e.g., by bringing executives together in committees, are also costly and time-consuming.

Evolution of Army Staffs

It is precisely because it is unreasonable that important commanders should be overwhelmed with the minutiae of communication and undesirable that the system of communications should be confused by abandoning the clearinghouse principle that armies have evolved the device of *staff*. But it has been the result of a long process of evolution. And in the course of history the term *staff* has come to be applied to quite a series of different positions and relationships. There are also other positions in some armies involving duties and relationships almost identical with those of staff officers which are not described as *staff*.¹⁸ Further, in the United States Army, a whole series of officers are known as *special staff officers* who are not so described in other armies.¹⁹

It is therefore scarcely surprising that businessmen should have become somewhat confused about the meaning of the term and have failed to appreciate the practical arrangements governing the use of different kinds of *staff* officers. But since writers on management and executives have borrowed the term and have applied it to actual situations, this semantic uncertainty has led them into practical mistakes.

The history of the evolution of staff in armies is a most interesting story dating back to about 1500 B.C., when Thothmes' command in Egypt had some form of intelligence service and the rudiments of an administrative system. Lieut. Col. J. D. Hittle, United States Marine Corps, has written an admirable short book on the subject which is strongly recommended to businessmen who are interested.²⁰ As he comments²¹ on the Egyptian experience, "At that remote date the military mind had discovered that not even the mentality of a

god-descended Pharaoh could successfully command an army without some help in executing the responsibilities of command."

But it was not really until the beginning of the nineteenth century that the size and complexity of modern armies forced the evolution of a complete staff system. The most significant moment was the reorganization of the Prussian General Staff following the crushing defeat of the Prussian armies by Napoleon at Jena (1806). As Hittle observes,²² "the Germans have always appreciated that there was virtue in building the military brain before the military body." Before that date, however, the intellectual foundations had been laid by Frederick the Great when, in 1765, he founded the Académie des Nobles to train young men of good family for the military and diplomatic services.

In describing the curriculum to a friend he observed, "You will, of course, see . . . that this method will not succeed with everybody, but that at the same time we shall eventually get from the whole body, certain men who will not only in course of time be generals by virtue of their rank, but what is more, possess the necessary qualifications."²³

Here we have the embryo of the second main reason for the evolution of the general staff system in modern armies, namely that a well-trained general staff is a nursery of good generals. Not all good staff officers also make good leaders. But the experience afforded general staff men of dealing with the problems of higher command while their minds are still young and flexible and of benefitting from the direct example of the best leaders of the previous generation has been an important factor in the development of many famous generals.

Business, of course, has a parallel problem, usually expressed as the difficulty of turning men who have spent much of their working lives as specialists into generalists. It is hardly necessary to point out that *generalist* and *general* are the same

word. The absence, in business, of any well-developed general staff system is a handicap to executive development. The opportunities open to the individual for *immediate advancement* as a specialist are allowed to outweigh, on occasion, the advantage of wider experience. And business is lacking in positions in which such wider experience of the problems of higher leadership can be gained while the candidate is still young.

That they possess advantages from the training standpoint, however, is no excuse for multiplying positions in business which are not justifiable economically. To create posts primarily for the purpose of training introduces an element of artificiality which defeats that purpose. But, if general staff positions are justifiable economically and for their own contribution to effectiveness, their existence would also be an advantage from the training angle.

Varieties of Staff

The Aide-de-Camp. The first step to a clearer understanding of the use of *staff* in armies is an appreciation of the different kinds of function to which the term is applied. The beginning of staff service in modern armies was the aide-de-camp, or "galloper" as he was sometimes called. As Bronsart von Schellendorff has observed in his classic *Duties of the General Staff*:²⁴

As long as Armies were small, and movements, encampments and fighting formations were laid down by hard-and-fast regulations, the want of trained General Staff officers was less felt. The plan determined upon by the General in command usually contained the details of execution. But few directions were necessary to ensure the quartering, concentration and general advance against the enemy of a force in the regulation fighting formation, in the way that was intended. A departure from the generally accepted forms . . . of course necessitated special instructions to the subordinate commanders. Such measures were intended to take the

enemy by surprise and be decisive, and were entirely a matter for the personal energy and initiative of the Commander.

But even in those earlier days, when a general could often see the whole field of battle for himself and take charge of it personally, he required assistance with communication. This was supplied by selected mounted officers whom he used for transmitting his instructions orally or in writing to subordinate commanders. If the instructions were written, these officers were no more than mounted orderlies. There was always the possibility, however, that instructions might have to be sent orally. A subordinate commander might cross-examine the messenger about the general's meaning or intentions. The service was one which often called for courage and determination: An aide-de-camp had to gallop into the thick of the fighting and be deterred by nothing from the task of ensuring that his message got through. Aides-de-camp lived at headquarters, forming, as it were, the general's military household.

The practice therefore developed of selecting young officers for this task because they were good horsemen, possessed unquestionable dash and courage, were well-mannered, and were personally agreeable to the general. These qualities rather than intelligence or intellectual attainments were the first requirements of the job. Because success in the position was so much a matter of personal compatibility, the appointment was, and still remains in the British Army, a personal one. It is a matter of the general's free and individual choice in which the ordinary assignment machinery of the Army plays no part.

These bright young officers, living close to, and in the confidence of, higher commanders, have always attracted a certain amount of natural human jealousy. They have tended to become the butt of the immemorial distaste felt by the fighting soldier for "the staff." Shakespeare²⁵ has immortalized it:

But I remember when the fight was done,
When I was dry with rage and extreme toil,

Breathless and faint, leaning upon my sword,
 Came there a certain lord, neat, and trimly dress'd,
 Fresh as a bridegroom; and his chin new reap'd
 Show'd like a stubble-land at harvest home;
 He was perfum'd like a milliner;
 . . . and still he smiled and talk'd,
 And as the soldiers bore dead bodies by,
 He call'd them untaught knaves, unmannerly,
 To bring a slovenly unhandsome corpse
 Betwixt the wind and his nobility.
 With many holiday and lady terms
 He question'd me;
 . . . he made me mad
 To see him shine so brisk, and smell so sweet,
 And talk so like a waiting-gentlewoman
 Of guns and drums and wounds,—God save the mark!—

So, for a variety of reasons, the aide-de-camp has tended to become traditionally something of a figure of fun in literature and in life. Francis Grose, writing in 1789, advised him: ²⁶ "If your General keeps a girl, it is your duty to squire her to all public places and to make an humble third of a party at whist or quadrille; but be sure never to win."

Aides-de-camp have survived to this day as personal staff officers. They are officers whose function it is to care for a general's well-being as an individual. They may accompany him on his rounds, keep notes for him and look after his maps and personal papers, conduct his private correspondence and arrange interviews, run his headquarters mess and act as social secretary—in short, do anything and everything the general may ask them to do. But, since the appointment is still a personal one, they are *not* a part of the official machinery of command of the formation. A good aide-de-camp, by exercising tact and discretion, may have a most valuable and helpful influence on the working of the command, but his official

responsibility is solely to his general. He has none of the official duties vis-à-vis his colleagues at headquarters and the remainder of the command prescribed for general staff officers.

Something of the historical ridicule surrounding the aide-de-camp attached itself to some of the early experiments in the use of staff assistance in business. These took the form of the appointment of assistants to high executives. And the ideas of these executives about the proper use of such assistants-to appear to have halted at about the same stage in the evolution of the staff concept as is represented militarily by the aide-de-camp. One early publication²⁷ dealing with the subject included among the duties of the assistant-to "... assistance in connection with some special hobby or interest of the superior." It is frequently suggested, even today, that²⁸ "... a good secretary can render most of the services performed by the assistant-to."

Such opinions reveal, not weaknesses in the military concept of staff assistance, but failure on the part of businessmen to distinguish between the assistance given to an *individual personally* by an aide-de-camp or private secretary and the assistance to an executive in discharging *the functions of his office* supplied by the general staff in modern armies.

The Special Staff Officer. The second class of officers to whom the term *staff* has been applied are officers performing special functions, ancillary to the work of the combat troops. Armies, no less than business, have been influenced by the immense growth and ramification of different branches of human knowledge, particularly over the last two centuries. If any large-scale undertaking is to make full use of the complex of skills which can contribute to its effectiveness, it is compelled to employ a widening range of people with special, as opposed to general, qualifications, particularly perhaps in caring for the health and well-being of those it employs.

But there are two major difficulties in employing specialists

to the greatest advantage. Their knowledge has to be built into the organization. Specialized knowledge is seldom of much utility by itself; it is valuable only as it contributes to a combined effort. The more an individual specializes, however, the more difficult it may be to integrate his knowledge and his personal effort into the combined activities of a group. He is apt to become a person apart, with aims and drives of his own dictated by his particular interest, immunized from the common purpose which should be the catalyst molding and welding the individual idiosyncrasies of different members of the group.

So widespread are the demands of many branches of specialized skill today and so difficult is it for the ablest individual to keep his knowledge thoroughly up to date in even *one* function, that it is virtually impossible for the same individual to be a competent specialist and at the same time to acquire the general knowledge of the profession which his specialization serves, requisite if he is to aspire to high position as an administrator. This has already been recognized by armies with respect to certain functions.

Armies need doctors, for instance. But it is generally accepted that it is impossible for the same individual to learn to be a first-class medical practitioner and also a good general. A medical man employed in a combat service must limit his ambitions to becoming the principal medical officer within the service which employs him. The highest positions in that service are closed to him. However senior and important he may become as a medical officer, his service is *ancillary and not central* to the main purpose of an army, which is to win battles. And he must accommodate his ambitions and his conduct to that basic fact, or his personal contribution, however valuable in itself, will become a threat to the cohesion of the organization as a whole.

The same tendency is observed with respect to other spe-

cialized functions, whether in the combat forces or in business. The need for strict observance of the chain of command is *not* a function of the lust of individuals for authority and power. It is an objective requirement of organization as such. Authentic communications must pass through clearinghouses at every level, not in order that the persons occupying clearinghouse positions should feel important, but as a defense against the disunifying effects of specialization. It is an assurance that each communication is reviewed *before it is issued* from the standpoint of the purpose of the undertaking as a whole, and that it does not strain cohesion because it emphasizes some perfectly legitimate but specialized enthusiasm rather than that general purpose.

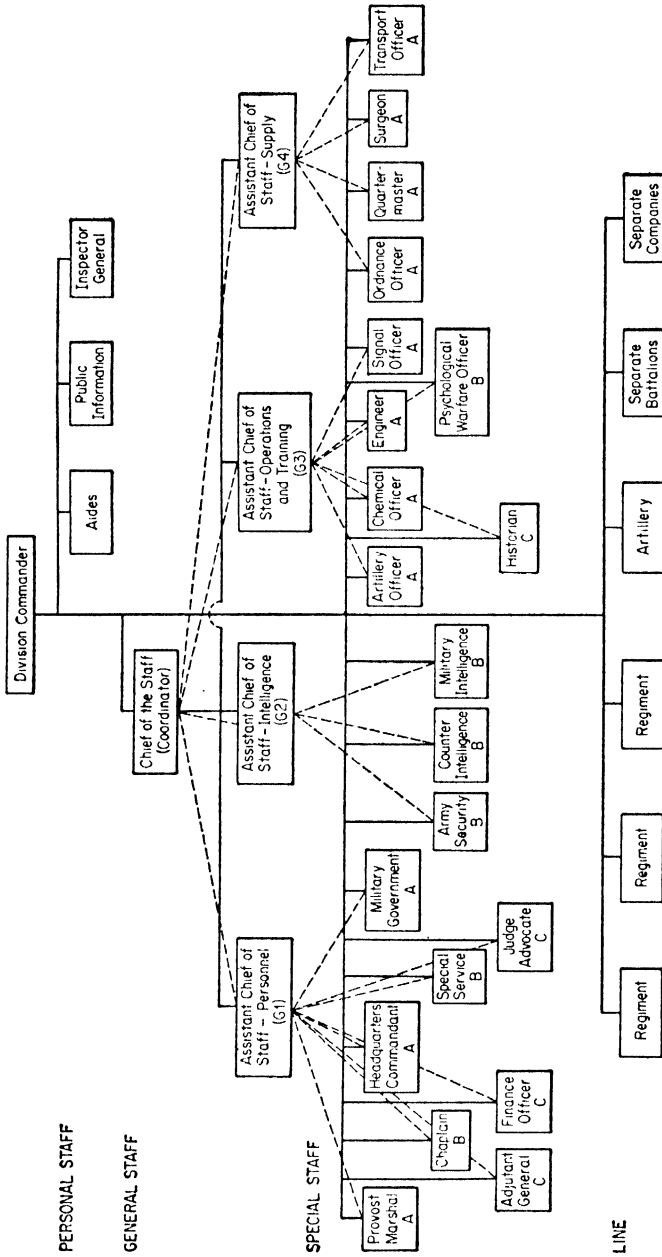
On the other hand, it is desirable that a commander or executive coming to a decision on any matter should have at his disposal the most skilled advice and assistance which can be made available bearing on that subject. Figure 7 shows the organization of an American infantry division in the years just after World War II. As will be noted, the headquarters includes a group of no less than twenty-one officers who are described as "special staff officers." And on his own subject any one of them may be consulted by the division commander, though usually only on the commander's initiative.

The primary function of the majority of these officers is not, however, to give such advice. Eleven of them (designated by the letter A) are in command of smaller or larger bodies of specialized combat or service personnel. Their primary responsibility is to ensure that the services of such specialized personnel are used effectively and integrated smoothly with the requirements of other units and of the command as a whole.

Whether they exercise this functional command directly depends entirely on circumstances. In some instances, specialists may be kept under central command. In others, they may be

ORGANIZATION—AMERICAN INFANTRY DIVISION

Showing lines of General Staff coordination - - - - -



(Adopted, and reproduced with permission, from a chart prepared by Lt. Col. Willard Pearson, U.S.A., 1954)

Figure 7

“seconded” to subordinate formations or units, such as regiments or combat groups. Where so seconded, they are under the immediate command of the officer commanding the subordinate formation or unit, and the principle of the chain of command is strictly observed. They look to the chief officer of their specialization within the division merely for technical guidance.

Such seconding to other formations or units may be permanent, quasi-permanent, or temporary. Larger military formations are almost always organized so that they may readily be broken down into smaller units, fully equipped with all the specialized weapons and services required for independent operations. At the same time, specialists of one kind or another can be concentrated readily and their special knowledge and/or skill used en masse. All the engineers of a division may be few in number and to consist of a few officers rendering all the medical personnel may be required to deal with the wounded of one unit which has had exceptional casualties.

A second group of these officers (designated by the letter *B*) also look after specialists of their own group within the area of the command. But such subordinate specialists tend to be few in number, and to consist of a few officers rendering the same special service in subordinate areas of the command and/or of a handful of clerks or specialists at headquarters. Members of a third group (designated by the letter *C*) have little command responsibility. They merely discharge the function indicated by their title within the area of the command; they are exclusively specialists.

As already pointed out, the designation of this group of officers as special *staff* officers is peculiar to the American Army. Whether this use of the word *staff* is wholly accurate is open to question. If, for example, the function of caring for personnel is delegated, then its head is a staff specialist. But it is arguable that if an individual is responsible for a defined

function, then he cannot be in any true sense of the term a *staff* officer. Essentially a staff is something to lean on. But a specialist, attending to a specified function, while he can assist his chief with advice, must, in so doing, add to the burden of his chief's other and principal tasks of communication and coordination and leadership. Because, as a specialist, it is his duty to insist and to insist strongly on the standpoint represented by his specialty, he is adding one more to the various different, and possibly conflicting, points of view which the chief has to integrate at the point of action.

In regard to the function of personnel, there is a growing body of opinion that concern for the well-being of those employed is a function that cannot effectively be delegated to a specialist. It is an integral part of leadership. And while an undertaking may employ many specialists dealing with services ancillary to this function, the function itself must remain central, part of line responsibility at all levels. Apart from other reasons, the relation of the employee to the employing agency is essentially a *working* relationship. And to attempt to deal with employee motivation and satisfaction in a department divorced from the control of the work for which the enterprise exists and employs the employee is artificial. That is why so many personnel departments are hard put to it to show that they are an essential part of the business.

The practice of armies is to treat personnel management as an integral part of the responsibility of command at every level. But at least five of the specialists employed at headquarters and shown in Figure 7 are concerned with special aspects of the discipline, equity, and care for their well-being shown in the handling of troops.

Whether the use of the term *special staff officer* be justified or not, two points do not admit of question:

1. Business has become very badly confused about the

functions and relationships implied in the term *staff*, because it has not drawn any clear distinction between the duties and authority of such special staff officers and those of general staff officers. A glance at the definitions of *staff* shown in Appendix A will confirm this.

2. A division commander who attempted to coordinate personally and without assistance the efforts of the six or more direct, or line, subordinates, three personal staff officers, and the twenty-one specialists shown in Figure 7 would have an impossible job.

The General Staff Officer. It is precisely for this reason that armies have evolved the general staff officer. He has emerged, within the last century and a half, because the growing size and complexity of armies made it impossible for commanders to secure effective communication and coordination without this kind of assistance. To complete the quotation from Bronsart von Schellendorff in which he pointed out that, as long as armies were small, the processes of command were relatively simple:

This state of affairs no longer exists. The enormous numerical strength of modern armies, and the way they must be organized to meet the constantly changing requirements of war, render necessary great differences in carrying out the details of military operations even under apparently similar circumstances of time and place. Consequently the higher leaders and Commanders require a regular staff of specially selected and trained officers.

His predecessor, Von Clausewitz, whose *On War*, published in 1832, is still the greatest theoretical analysis of the military art, put the issue more simply: ²⁹

The General Staff is intended to convert the ideas of the General commanding into orders, not only conveying the former to the troops, but also working out all matters of detail, thus relieving the General from a great amount of trouble.

The insistence on help with communication may be noted. Current American practice adopts an even simpler definition: ³⁰

The staff of a unit consists of the officers who assist the commander in his exercise of command.

These quotations underline the broad distinction between general staff and special staff. While special staff officers exist to discharge some single function, the primary responsibility of general staff officers is to help a commander to carry out *his* functions. In particular, they are there to assist him to coordinate, which means attending to the details of communication.

As can be seen from Figure 7 the general staff work of an American division is broken down into four groups concerned with personnel, intelligence, operations and training, and supply. Members of the special staff dealing with subjects falling within these four groups communicate "through" the appropriate assistant chief of staff. The work of the four assistant chiefs is again coordinated by the chief of staff before being submitted to the division commander or issued as his orders. The effect, of course, is that the division commander, instead of having to communicate personally with his six or more line subordinates and his twenty-one specialized subordinates, sees any individual only when he wishes to. The whole of the mechanics of communication is taken care of by the general staff. At the same time, the division commander ensures that orders and instructions are in line with his ideas and intentions through his close contact with a single individual, the chief of staff, responsible for ensuring that all staff activities are such as would have the commander's approval.

Difficulties in Understanding the General Staff Concept

Administrative Distance. Many businessmen find difficulty in understanding the general staff concept. They feel, for in-

stance, that commanders of regiments and heads of the more important special services must be isolated from the division commander by a layer of general staff officers interposed between them. In practice this is not so. A division commander who knows how to use his general staff properly, in fact, secures so much relief from the minutiae of administration that he is enabled to see *more* of his principal subordinates personally than an officer of equivalent status in business.

He merely has to be careful that, in such interviews, he does not confuse the work of his general staff by committing himself on matters which are already being processed through staff channels. Since most of his principal subordinates have either general staff officers of their own or junior officers acting in a similar capacity, a certain discretion in withholding decisions is understood and accepted. The facts that a commander is aware of his point of view, is taking up the matter personally, and will be seeing him again shortly usually satisfy any subordinate, however self-important and self-opinionated, unless he is trying to secure some illegitimate advantage. In these circumstances the commander is wise to postpone decision. And if he has to decide that the subordinate's claim or arguments are ill founded, the fact that he has investigated the matter and has taken the trouble to explain personally why a point of view is groundless is usually sufficient.

As far as the principal specialists are concerned, they are not "under" the general staff. They are responsible, as Figure 7 shows, directly to the division commander. They have a *right of access* to him. He would expect them to make use of it if they felt that the safety of the command or of any portion of it, or a principle of vital importance to their function and its effective working, were being imperiled. He would *not* expect them to make use of it merely as a matter of personal dignity or status or as a means of adjusting differences about administrative detail which may occur between such special

staff officers and the general staff. A good general would discourage such use of the right of access, which is intended to safeguard the dignity and competence of the function and to ensure that specialized advice is not lightly disregarded. It is *not* intended to permit officers who should have the seniority and intelligence to know better to waste the time of higher commanders in adjudicating the disputes which are bound to arise in any form of human undertaking and which should be adjusted by the good sense and will to collaborate of the parties concerned.

Difference between a General Staff Officer and a Specialist. Another difficulty in understanding general staff work arises from the fact that an assistant chief of staff, while holding an appointment as G1, 2, 3, or 4, deals with a particular group of subjects. To the businessman this position seems identical with that of a vice president in charge of a particular function—personnel, for instance. It is not. It differs from the position of a vice president, personnel, or a vice president and controller in a number of important respects:

1. The vice president in charge of a function in business is responsible to the president for that function throughout the undertaking; he may have the authority that goes with that functional responsibility. The general staff officer has no such responsibility. He deals with a function and acts as the channel for communication with and from specialists serving that function. But it is a function which, by definition, has been reserved as the direct responsibility of the commander. The general staff officer is merely the agent of the commander in dealing with one of his, the commander's, functions.

2. Heads of functions in business are often professional specialists. A controller is frequently a professional accountant. It is only rarely and, usually, by accident that a general staff officer is a professional specialist in the whole or a part of the function with which he is dealing on behalf of his commander.

Normally he is an ordinary combat officer specially selected for intelligence and force of character. He then receives training, usually of a year's duration, at a staff college, and this training is in *all* the duties of a general staff officer, not in a particular function.

3. His appointment as a general staff officer, following the practice of armies, is usually of limited duration, say, two to four years. At the end of that period he will expect either to return to duty with the line or to receive another general staff appointment, which is unlikely to be in the same group. An officer posted to the same group of general staff duties for two or three appointments running would be likely to become concerned lest his experience become confined to too narrow a channel and his prospects of future command thereby impaired. Normally an able officer destined for high command in war alternates between regimental and general staff appointments. The first clear indication that he is in line to become a general is his appointment as chief of staff to a division or higher formation. Obviously it will be a handicap to him in such a position if he has experience with only a single group of general staff duties.

4. In some armies it is laid down officially that general staff officers are *not* to consider themselves specialists nor to behave as such.

The Problem of Authority. Unquestionably, however, the greatest difficulty encountered by businessmen in understanding the general staff concept resides in the point made by Von Clausewitz that the general staff "convert the ideas of the general into orders," and "convey them to the troops." How, they ask, is it possible for someone of inferior rank to address orders and instructions to officers who are his superiors in rank and/or seniority without causing resentment and conflicts about competence and authority? It is true that the orders and instructions are issued in the commander's name. But

everyone knows that he never sees most of them until after they are published.

Such conflicts do, of course, occur—in armies as in other forms of organization. No one has ever suggested that military organization is immune from human weaknesses. And it is commonly accepted that a general staff officer's job is a delicate one. To quote from a British official manual (issued before World War I):³¹

The position of a staff officer is a difficult one. He is not merely a secretary, since he is empowered to act in his commander's name, and since it is necessary that this power should be exercised when occasion demands. To exercise such power judiciously, and to know when to refrain from exercising it, demands not only considerable military knowledge, tact, judgment and ability in the staff officer himself, but a most intimate knowledge of the commander's views, plans and methods; and an equally intimate knowledge of the characteristics and abilities of the subordinate authorities in the chain of control. It follows that the efficient performance of staff duties is far more difficult in a new organization than in one which has existed for some time, and in which commanders and staff know each other well and are accustomed to work together.

Broadly, the acceptance of general staff instructions in armies is based on two principles:

1. Recognition by all concerned that the general staff officer has no *personal* authority. The authority which he exercises is his commander's, not his own. It is purely *as his commander's representative* that he issues communications. He is, as it were, an extension of his commander's personality—authority anonymous.³²

2. Recognition by all staff officers that the duty of seeing that their commander's intentions are carried out depends on "a smooth and efficient coordination of effort" by "all portions of the force," whether specialist or line.³³ That is to say that friction, whether personal, professional, competitive, or due

to faulty communications, is the one thing they have to avoid.

A well-trained staff officer is taught to accomplish these two objectives:

1. By personal acceptance of principle 1 stated above, by seeing himself *not* as exercising the commander's authority but as serving all in the command, he is charged specifically with the duty of *helping them* to carry out the commander's intentions.

2. By realizing that, since friction may occur in all forms of human cooperation, it is his duty to anticipate its causes and to eliminate them. It is a failure on his part if differences are allowed to come to a head and to preoccupy his commander's time and effort in resolving them. The proper time to adjust differences is *before*, and not *after*, instructions have been issued.

General staff officers can help themselves and their commander in achieving these ends by the observance of certain simple rules. They must have:

1. A clear understanding of the organization of the general staff itself supported by complete understanding and cooperation between its members and a practical knowledge of the working of all branches fostered by frequent discussion.

2. A comparable knowledge of the practical working of the fighting units and of the specialized services in the command. This can be improved by frequent visits, leading to an intimate knowledge of the conditions under which troops carry out their tasks and mutual confidence.

3. A constant awareness of the somewhat jaundiced view likely to be taken by the officers and men who have to do the fighting of those who, in what may appear to be a sheltered occupation, issue orders for them to do so.

4. Sensitivity to the point that the least appearance of assuming a personal authority which they do not possess may spark this natural suspicion into conscious resentment. This

difficulty can be overcome by care in cultivating good personal relations and by keeping constantly in mind the principle that the general staff is there to *help* the formations and units, *not* to act as their masters.

Differences in Military and Business Conditions. Whatever the care taken to prevent mistakes and misunderstandings in applying the general staff concept to business, it does represent a refined form of organization which armies have evolved over a long period of time through many trials and errors. It is not a form with which business can afford to experiment lightly. In particular, general staff duties cannot be undertaken without certainty of disaster by individuals who lack special training for them and who have not proved their capacity by outstanding performance in subordinate executive positions. Without this background it is virtually impossible for them to win the confidence of their chief's principal subordinates. Nor can an official in a general staff relationship perform effectively for a chief who does not himself understand the characteristics of general staff service and how to make effective use of it.

Apart from these general considerations, conditions are existent in armies which are not at present usually found in business and which facilitate acceptance of general staff working:

1. The first of these is the distinction between status and function by the device of rank. The military tradition that an officer of lower rank or seniority *cannot* issue orders to his superior is so strong and the principle of the chain of command so well established that it seldom, if ever, occurs to a senior military officer that a communication received from a general staff officer is not authentic, i.e., that it expresses an illegitimate expression of personal authority by the general staff officer issuing it and not the intention of the commander. Persons in business are far more sensitive on this point pre-

cisely because the absence of any system of rank leads them to attach much more importance to unofficial symbols of status.

2. As already mentioned, there are many subordinate relationships in armies in which an officer or even a noncommissioned officer acts "for" a commander and communicates in this context with others who are his superiors in rank or seniority. Thus, from the earliest years of his service the young officer or soldier becomes accustomed to receiving communications from those who are his inferiors in rank which he accepts as authentic because he assumes that the subordinate is representing a superior officer; he regards him not as an inferior attempting to assume authority illegitimately but as a cog in the system of communications. He is thus conditioned for the general staff relationship when he encounters it at a later stage of his career.

The General Staff Officer at a National Headquarters (Pentagon Staff)

Up to this point the discussion of general staff officers and their duties has been confined to those assisting commanders either in the field in war or in command of districts at home, i.e., commanders whose duties are predominantly executive. But modern democracies have a second group of general staff officers who "... at the order of the country's highest military authority prepares the plans for the execution of national military policy, and ... determines the manner in which the field forces are to be utilized."³⁴ They are employed at the national military headquarters—at a Pentagon or war office. These general staff officers are identical in origin and training with those employed to assist field commanders. That is to say, they are specially selected regimental officers who have been trained at a staff college. Usually they have held a staff appointment to a commander of troops before posting to national headquarters.

Since, collectively, they represent the highest military authority in the country, they are sometimes referred to as *The General Staff*.

In modern times the necessity of coordinating the activities of different defense forces at the highest level has tended to divide even the general staff into two groups. First, there are staffs at the defense department level operating as the highest staff agency of the armed forces as a whole, sometimes as employees of a secretariat or ministry of defense or of a chiefs-of-staff committee. Second, there are staffs at the service level (navy, army, air force), which are usually departmentalized. In almost every nation these higher staffs have preceded the organization of general staffs in field commands. It has been pointed out that "... wherever an efficient higher staff has been organized, the lower staffs throughout the army have reflected that efficiency. . . . Any staff organization throughout an army is dependent for its origin and stimulus upon the highest staff organization." ³⁵

But in organization and in the functions, authority, and responsibility involved in their positions, these general staff officers employed at a national headquarters differ from those employed with field commands in several important respects.

Theoretically in the democracies the supreme control of the armed forces must rest with the civil power. In the United States the President is the Commander in Chief of all of the Armed Forces; some of his functions in this capacity he delegates to the Secretary of Defense. In Great Britain there is a Minister of Defence. In a not very clearly defined relation to the Minister of Defence is the Secretary of State for War, who controls the Army through the Army Council, and there is a considerable element in the War Office drawn from the ranks of the Civil Service and therefore not directly under Army command. Formally, the Sovereign is the Commander in Chief of each of the armed services. But, however genuine the deter-

mination that the representatives of the people shall exercise ultimate control over the armed forces, the individuals concerned are necessarily amateurs. And, in time of war, the people themselves are inclined to repose greater confidence in trained professional competence.

In any event a title has to be found for the professional head of each of the armed services. In the United States Army he is known as the Chief of Staff and in Great Britain as the Chief of the Imperial General Staff. In constitutional theory this is accurate enough. Both are staff officers to the nominal commanders (the President or the Minister of Defence). But, in practice, both the nominal commanders have many other preoccupations. And some of the functions of these so-called "staff officers" approximate those of a commander in chief.

Similarly, the heads of the departments at a national headquarters occupy a more independent position in some respects than do the assistant chiefs of staff at a formation, such as those shown in Figure 7. While their work may be coordinated with that of other departments by the Chief of Staff in the United States or the Army Council in Great Britain, they have not the same measure of responsibility for over-all coordination as a staff officer with troops. Nor is there the same responsibility to, and supervision by, the chief of staff and/or the commander. Much of their work tends to be definitely more functional and specialized than is the work of general staff officers with formations. Other things apart, departments concerned with administration (personnel and logistics) will have many working relations with other civil departments of the government. The officer concerned with personnel will work closely with the department concerned with labor and with legal and police authorities over questions of discipline. The officer concerned with procurement will have relations with other government departments concerned with finance, industry, and commerce since it is of the essence of defense

under modern conditions that military requirements should be geared into the economic development of the country as a whole.

The heads of the great departments into which the general staff at national headquarters is divided tend to be senior officers high in their profession who, if employed with troops, might well be commanding an army corps. Their subordinates at various levels who carry on the daily work of the different divisions of such departments, while described as "general staff officers," have duties which more nearly correspond to those of responsible executives. On the other hand their relations with the districts or commands into which the army is divided in peacetime are, in principle, identical with those which govern the dealings between the general staff and the commanders of regiments shown in Figure 7.

Planning and Performance. Particularly in peacetime, the national headquarters of all the armed forces are engaged primarily in planning and policy making rather than in execution. Because of this fact and their close association with the civil government, much of their work, particularly that of their senior officers, is on the borderline between the political and executive levels of action discussed earlier in this chapter.

For professional soldiers whose training is directed primarily to vigorous executive leadership in war, experience with this quasi-political work is sometimes extremely unpleasant. And, if they try to develop political skills, they may find themselves involved in internal personal conflicts which destroy their effectiveness as soldiers without adding to their reputation as administrators. Such difficulties and aberrations are particularly likely to develop in the period of letdown which assails combat forces after the conclusion of a major war. Civilian critics sometimes overlook the effect on any profession of trying to live like a concertina, a condition which is imposed on

the combat forces of democracies by the alternations between war and peace establishments.

In fact the majority of the criticisms directed at military organization are concerned with this borderland area where an attempt is made to assimilate political and executive modes of action and military and civil concepts of organization and administration. This is admittedly an extremely delicate operation and one in which failure is almost invariably followed by a considerable volume of recrimination. In this latter exercise military officers are handicapped, as long as they are serving, by regulations which forbid any publication not sanctioned by higher authority.

The Handicaps of a Central Situation. The national headquarters of the combat forces of almost all armies tend to be situated in the capital city of the country concerned.

Almost the first lesson taught to a young general staff officer serving with troops is to go and see for himself the conditions under which soldiers are living, to get to know personally the officers with whom he deals. It is the same point as that made with reference to leadership in discussing the problem of administrative distance. The only effective safeguard against "bureaucracy," the insidious breakdown of effective understanding which invariably ensues when officials rely on "paper" communications unsupported by personal contact, is for administrators of all grades to have or make time to go and see for themselves. The first sign that a general, or any other executive, is no leader is when he becomes "chair-borne." He is content to fall back on penmanship about circumstances with which he has no direct experience, to rely on the written word to do duty for the deed undone.

Since general staff officers are, by definition, intended to assist commanders with the functions of command, the same principle is applicable to them. For the reasons given by Lilienthal, it is much more difficult to enforce this principle

at a national headquarters than in lower formations. It is useless to provide a leader with general staff assistance in order that he may have time to see for himself, if general staff officers in their turn create a climate of bureaucracy by imagining that what happens across their desks is more important than the actual sentiments and circumstances of those individuals for whose administration their commander is responsible.

The Term Staff

The term *staff* as used in armies is therefore applied to at least four different kinds of positions involving different functions and relationships. The word *relationship* is used of different kinds of authority and responsibility. There are personal staff officers, special staff officers, general staff officers to a commander with troops, and general staff officers at a national military headquarters. These different types of positions and relationships are shown in summary form in Figure 8.

RELATIONSHIPS IN ORGANIZATION
FUNCTIONS AND KINDS OF AUTHORITY & RESPONSIBILITY
IN DIFFERENT POSITIONS IN ORGANIZATIONS

DESCRIPTION OF POSITION	FUNCTION	AUTHORITY	RESPONSIBILITY
LINE	Executive	Direct	General
STAFF 1. PERSONAL STAFF	Personal Assistance to Commander	None	Personal only
2. SPECIAL STAFF	Specialized	Indirect (through "Line")	Functional
3. GENERAL STAFF a. TO COMMANDER OF TROOPS	Assistant Executive (to assist with the functions of command)	Representative	Coordinative
b. AT NATIONAL MILITARY HEADQUARTERS	Assistant Legislative (to assist with the policy- making and planning of national defense usually specialized)	Representative	Functional

Figure 8

In addition there are, in most armies, officers and even non-commissioned officers whose authority and responsibility have similar characteristics. Their positions exist to assist a superior in exercising the functions of command. In this capacity they issue authentic communications to individuals who are their superiors in status or seniority. But they are not described as "staff officers." They are known as executive officers, adjutants, quartermasters, and so on. It is not titles that are of importance in efforts at cooperation, but the human relations which they connote. Since business appears to have imagined that there was a single type of authority and responsibility known as *staff*, to be comprehended in a single definition, it is not surprising that attempts to introduce by analogy this nonexistent scheme of things have led to a great many misunderstandings and disappointments.

Can Business Use General Staff Officers?

Whether it will prove possible in the future for business to make use of positions analogous to that of the general staff officer to a commander with troops is an open question. As already emphasized, the development of viable and constructive general staff relations in armies has been a matter of prolonged experiment. Before arriving at a workable solution, armies have made many classic errors, some of which have resulted in national disasters of the first magnitude.

It is quite possible that business is as yet too unsophisticated in the problems of large-scale organization, and in particular in dealing with the relations between status and function, to permit any official's occupying so delicate a position as that of a general staff officer without great difficulties. The position is one which can and does attract the jealousy of senior line subordinates, unless the greatest care and precision are used in defining the functions and relationships involved and in ensuring that such definitions are not infringed because of human weaknesses and ambitions.

What does seem certain is that large-scale modern undertakings cannot function to their maximum effect without an extremely exact and intricate system of authentic communications.

In the vast majority of business undertakings, even today, the system of formal communications and efforts to ensure that it is comprehensive, exact, and effective are far less developed than they are in armies, with their greater experience of this particular problem. The authors know of no instance in business in which the method of drafting and the arrangement of instructions are standardized with the detail found, for instance, in the British Army (Appendix B). The object of such standardization is not, of course, to limit the initiative and originality of individuals. It is so to train them in exact method that, even in the stress of action, they are unlikely to omit essential detail in drafting and are enabled to grasp the principal points in any document in the minimum of reading time. The whole arrangement for publication of standing orders, routine orders, operation orders, administrative instructions, training manuals, and similar material and for keeping them amended to date is considerably more precise and comprehensive than is the usual practice in business undertakings.

Such communications are always issued by the line, i.e., by the office of the principal executive at each level. This throws on such offices a considerable burden of administrative detail. And, as has been pointed out in earlier chapters, leaders at all levels in business, and particularly chief executives, tend to carry an excessive burden of work. "The load on top management" is not a fiction invented by theorists in organization; it is a pressing reality in too many businesses.

In the use of general staff officers with troops the armies of the world have invented and developed a device for unloading the detailed aspects of commanding from the commander himself. It is a device which works. Whatever the difficulties of

introducing it into business practice, two things are certain:

1. Business has need of some device for meeting this problem.

2. No device will work well unless it is introduced by a chief executive who recognizes the need for it, understands how it should work, and himself sets the necessary example to make it work properly.

There is a considerable volume of evidence that many chief executives simply do not understand *how* the general staff concept works. Not being accustomed to the idea, they simply do not regard it as possible that a man at the head of a business should be able to delegate a great deal of the detailed effort involved in discharging his own functions while retaining his full personal authority and responsibility for the results.

One of the most important and exacting of those functions is coordination, which is very largely a matter of communication. As was recorded in an earlier chapter, many chief executives were unable to identify any specific portion of their time and effort as devoted to coordination. They were aware that they were responsible for coordination. They were inclined to reply in the sense that "everything they did was coordination."

This may be so. But, in the light of what has been said in the previous section about the relative lack of system in the communication arrangements in business, it is equally possible that they are, in fact, neglecting this problem. Lacking general staff assistance, it is manifestly impossible for the chief executive himself, or for his private secretary, to act as the central clearinghouse for all authentic communications at the highest level in a large corporation.

But a function which is not discharged systematically in the right place does not simply fall by the wayside. If it is an essential function, it is merely discharged unsystematically in the wrong place, at a far greater cost in time and effort to all

concerned. No system of human cooperation can work at all without some arrangements for coordinating individual efforts. If authentic communications are not cleared centrally at the highest level, they will be cleared piecemeal by spontaneous arrangements between individual executives, committees for this and that, and so on. The chief executive will find himself attending a great many meetings, dealing with misunderstandings between his principal executives, and so on. Coordination will be less effective than it might be, but there will be sufficient cohesion to enable the business to continue.

The general staff concept is not something esoteric and complicated and foreign to business thinking. It is simply an arrangement for taking the elements of the chief executive's or an executive's task to pieces and for discharging onto the shoulders of subordinates all those portions of the total task which can be so discharged without subtracting from the executive's authority and responsibility.

The only unusual feature about it is the principle that the general staff officer, as such, has no personal authority and therefore no responsibility for the consequences of his actions except his responsibility to his chief. From this standpoint a general and a well-knit general staff are, theoretically, one person. They are a commanding group, or team.

The underlying principle on which the chief executive's task is broken down is the late Mary Parker Follett's well-known aphorism, "a decision is a moment in a process."³⁶ If the process of commanding is examined analytically, it is quite clear that there are parts of it, both in the preparatory stages preceding the act of decision and in the implementing stages which follow it, which can be carried out for a chief by other people without in any way diminishing his authority and responsibility. That is, always provided that those "other people" do not take advantage of their intimate relation with the chief to assume that they personally possess the authority and carry the

responsibility which are his, and that his principal subordinates do not imagine that they are attempting to do so. If this is done, the chief will have more time in which to think about and to devote to those other aspects of leadership on which the willing acceptance of administrative arrangements so largely depends.

The conception, development, and execution of any complex action calling for the integration of many forms of specialized knowledge and the coordinated application of a variety of skills involve, broadly, six stages. These six stages in the logical development of complex actions correspond with the six aspects into which Henri Fayol analyzed the function of management.³⁷ They are:

<i>Stages in the development of a complex action</i>	<i>Henri Fayol's aspects of management</i>
1. Investigation of a situation	Forecasting
2. Consideration of alternative courses of action	Planning
3. Selection of one among the alternatives, i.e., decision	Commanding
4. Provision of the necessary facilities, both hu- man and material	Organizing
5. Communication to all concerned and ensuring throughout the action that each understands his or her part in the whole	Coordinating
6. Inspection to ensure that action is taking place in line with stage 3, to eliminate misunder- standing and to deal with emergencies	Controlling

The use of a *general* staff consists in appointing assistants to a chief (executive) who, using his authority and engaging in his responsibility, relieve him entirely of stages 1, 2, 4, and 5 and, in large measure, of stage 6. The chief is thus left free to concentrate on stage 3, viz., decision, and on the aspects of leadership other than management (administration). These are representation, initiation, and interpretation. Thus, in military organization (United States Army) (Figure 9):

1. Investigation is the province of G2 (Intelligence).
2. Planning is the province of G3 (Operations and Training).
4. Provision is the province of G1 (for Personnel) and of G4 (for Material).
5. Communication is peculiarly the province of the Chief of Staff who is assisted by G1, 2, 3, and 4 in details falling within their provinces.

6. Inspection is the duty of all members of the general staff. But, since they have no personal authority, remedial action, save in extreme emergency, is left either to the Chief, or if the Chief is not available, to the Chief of Staff.

The multifarious functions of the Chief are thus broken down and delegated without any infringement of his responsibility and authority, which remain unified. This arrangement gives him *time* to attend to *all* the functions of leadership and,

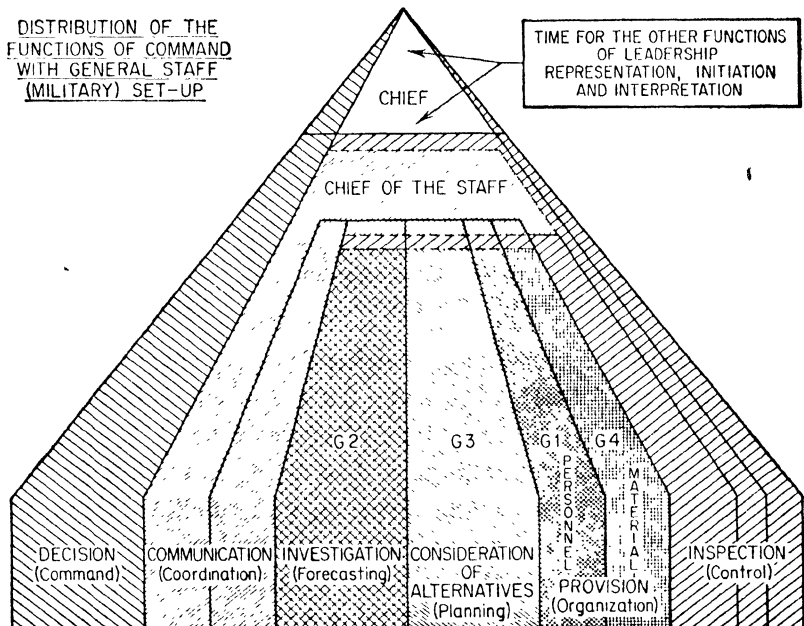


Figure 9

particularly, to maintain contact with those under his command.

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¹ The Hon. (later Sir) John W. Fortescue, *A History of the British Army*, St. Martin's Press, Inc., New York, 1899, vol. I, p. 257.

² *Ibid.*, 1930, vol. XIII, p. 577.

³ Cornwallis, who surrendered at Yorktown, later had a brilliant military and administrative career in India.

⁴ "What can one make out of so strange a man? . . . Howe was not the man to run away from a gun. Perhaps the key to the riddle is his avid Whiggery. It is possible that he never had the remotest intention of winning the war, winning it, that is, on the field of battle. Neither did he have any intention of losing it. All his vigor seemed to focus on an amicable armistice." (John Hyde Preston, *Revolution 1776*, Harcourt, Brace and Company, New York, 1933, p. 261.)

⁵ F. W. Taylor, "Shop Management," in *Scientific Management*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1947, pp. 98-99.

⁶ In "Shop Management," pp. 108-109, presumably referring to his experience at Bethlehem Steel Works, Taylor says: "The second function of the over-foremen is *to smooth out the difficulties which arise between the different types of bosses . . .* at the start there is sure to be more or less friction between the two [the speed boss and the gang boss]" and ". . . if two of these bosses meet with a difficulty [which they and their respective over-foremen are unable to settle] the case is referred by them to the assistant superintendent, whose duties, for a certain time at least, *may consist largely in arbitrating such difficulties.*" [Italics supplied.]

⁷ "The writer wishes to call attention to the analogy which functional foremanship bears to the management of a large up-to-date school." (*Ibid.*, p. 109.)

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁹ David E. Lilienthal, *TVA: Democracy on the March*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1953, p. 165.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 142-143.

¹¹ After World War I, one of the authors was employed by a firm of British manufacturers of Quaker origin in which feeling against military forms of organization was particularly strong. Time after time instances of military ineptitude and rigidity encountered by members of the staff were quoted in arguments. In every case he was able to analyze in detail, such examples proved to be due to "temporary officers" who were short of full professional training and who had imagined that the authority of their military rank entitled them to be arbitrary with members of the public.

¹² There is a standing joke in the British Army about a sergeant who charged a private with "dumb insolence."

¹³ Peter F. Drucker, *The Practice of Management*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1954, p. 178.

¹⁴ Lilienthal, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

¹⁵ Chester I. Barnard, *The Functions of the Executive*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1938, p. 217.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 215.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 180. Tabulation and words in brackets added.

¹⁸ For example, in the British Army, the adjutant of an infantry battalion, the company sergeant major, and the company quartermaster sergeant of an infantry company.

¹⁹ In the British Army, for example, the specialized officers known as *special staff officers* in the United States Army are called *commanders* of technical troops and *directors* of administrative services and departments.

²⁰ J. D. Hittle, *The Military Staff: Its History and Development*, Military Service Publishing Company, Harrisburg, Pa., 1949.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 48.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

²⁴ Bronsart von Schellendorff, *The Duties of the General Staff*, Berlin, 1895, English translation by various hands of 4th (rev. ed.), H. M. Stationery Office, London, 1905, p. 2.

²⁵ *King Henry IV, Part I*, Act I, scene 3.

²⁶ *Advise to Officers of the British and Irish Armies*, 1782, republished, with drawings by Frank Wilson, by Jonathan Cape, Ltd., London, 1946, p. 23.

²⁷ *Functions of an Assistant to the President*, Metropolitan Life Insurance Company Policyholders Service Bureau, New York, c. 1932. (Pamphlet.)

²⁸ Ernest Dale, *Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure*, American Management Association Research Report 20, New York, 1952, p. 65.

²⁹ von Schellendorff, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³⁰ *The Staff Officers' Field Manual of the United States Army*, quoted in Hittle, *op. cit.*, p. 2.

³¹ *Staff Manual: War (Provisional)*, H. M. Stationery Office, London, 1912, p. 10. It may be noted that, despite the emphasis on the difficulty of staff relations where commanders, staff, and troops are unaccustomed to working together, in two world wars the United States and Great Britain have raised large numbers of new divisions which have operated effectively in the field within about twelve to eighteen months of initial formation and for which *trained* staff officers were not available in

nearly sufficient numbers. It would appear from this experience that the relationship is not one which is too difficult for men of reasonable intelligence to learn fairly rapidly. What did emerge in the British Army in World War I was that staff work demands a certain level of intelligence and that no amount of military training and experience could equip an officer for staff duties, even at quite subordinate levels, if his intellectual equipment was below the necessary minimum standard. As a British military writer observed of the controversy between amateurs and professionals which was endemic during the American Civil War: "After serving in twenty campaigns, Frederick the Great's mules were still mules." (Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. R. Henderson, *Stonewall Jackson*, Longmans, Green & Co., Ltd., London, 1909, vol. I, p. 227.)

³² The delicacy of this convention hardly needs emphasizing. In armies it is safeguarded in various ways. If, for instance, a commander becomes a casualty, it is the first duty of his chief of staff to inform the next senior officer that he is now in command. The new commander may take some time to disengage himself from his current responsibilities. That does not matter. The chief of staff can carry on in his name—he has a commander to "represent." In business more than one quite promising assistant-to has been wrecked by carelessness on this point. A president's office is working well. He takes a holiday or goes on a business trip. Because he hesitates to designate another senior officer to act for him in his absence, his assistant-to is left "up in the air." Everyone knows that the chief is away and that the assistant has no one to represent. Communications he may send out are not representative but are issued by him personally. There is trouble. On his return, the president blames his assistant. But it is the president's fault. He has destroyed the convention on which the assistant depended by neglecting to nominate a senior officer to act for him in his absence.

³³ Quoted phrases from *Field Service Regulations*, H. M. Stationery Office, London, 1930, vol. I, chap. 3, p. 23.

³⁴ Hittle, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

³⁶ "The Meaning of Responsibility in Business Management," in *Dynamic Administration*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1941, p. 146.

³⁷ *Administration industrielle et générale*, Dunod, Paris, 1925, English translation by Constance Storrs, *General and Industrial Management*, Sir Isaac Pitman & Sons, Ltd., London, 1949, p. 6: "To manage is to forecast and plan, to organize, to command, to coordinate and to control." In the original French, Fayol distinguishes only five elements or aspects of management, but the French word *prevoyance*, which he uses for the first of these elements, means both to foresee the future and to make arrangements to meet it.

6

Comparison of Military and Business Staffs

One way to judge whether some of the military concepts of staff work have value for business is to examine what happens when military men join industry and introduce military methods of operation. In recent years, industry has offered positions to many successful military men. Often these men are placed at the head of divisions or departments engaged in work for the government. Sometimes they become corporate chief executives.

In the absence of a large-scale study, it would be unfair to make categorical statements about the extent to which these men carry the military staff concept into business. Nevertheless, it is logical to expect that a man thoroughly trained in military staff work will inject certain aspects of his former experience into the business world. It seems likely also that he will expect or request that certain procedures to which he is accustomed be followed by his new associates. And observation confirms that this is so in many cases.

A recently retired military officer who became executive assistant in his father's business commented:

"It was inconceivable to me that there should be anything but compliance with instructions. Yet not only were there feet-dragging and partial effort in carrying out some assignments, but—the most surprising thing of all—some people came up to me and asked, 'Why?'"

Table 2 on page 115 shows a comparison of the extent to which an executive with long military experience tends to use his staff contrasted with the more limited use made of it by the executive whose entire career has been spent in business.

To understand the differences in attitude between the two types of executives, it is, of course, important to consider the different types of conditioning to which they have been subjected.

The Military-minded Executive

The executive who brings to his position a rich background of military experience is an executive who has been influenced to a major degree by the basic precepts of military training. Some of these molding concepts are:

1. Orders are to be obeyed—not argued, questioned, modified, or perhaps ignored.
2. The objective is all-important, and the necessary resources must be utilized to reach it.
3. Coordination is vital. Without background support—when needed and in a sufficient amount—the battle can be endangered or lost.
4. Assignments must be carried out according to standard operating procedures. Short cuts and deviations are not encouraged.
5. Discipline, which includes respect, control, and propriety, is the oil that keeps administration functioning smoothly.

It is imperative that principles such as these be hammered into the young cadet. When a nation's security is in question, laxity or exceptions could be suicidal.

When the military-trained man takes a position in business, his attitude is likely to reflect his training and experience. His views will include:

1. **Status of Position.** Full respect should be accorded superiors at all times.

2. **General Instructions.** An order once issued should not come back to the executive for clarification or the working out of details. It is the responsibility of the staff men to make the necessary refinements and do the programming.

3. **Changes and Modifications.** An altered or countermanded order is equivalent to a new order.

4. **Budgetary Limitations.** The cost limitation in a budget is more likely to be considered a guide rather than an absolute amount. In the military, success is usually more important than keeping within a budget.

The Nonmilitary Executive

The executive who has been brought up in a business climate and who has little or no experience in military command, is apt to have quite a different outlook:

1. **Status of Position.** He enjoys the importance of his title, but covertly would like to be treated as "one of the boys."

2. **Specific Instructions.** He outlines a definite course of action and is prepared to get in at the beginning of a program and start it on its way.

3. **Changes and Modifications.** He is more likely to make these informally than the military-minded executive is, and to issue fewer reports and memoranda. He is also more likely to bypass established channels of communication.

4. **Budgetary Limitations.** He is usually a stickler for keeping costs in line.

TABLE 2. EXECUTIVE DEPENDENCE ON STAFF

Work assignment	Extent of executive's dependence on staff		Comment
	Executive with military background (M)	Executive with business background (B)	
Initiation of project	Considerable	Little	B enjoys initiating; M prefers that projects come to him complete in essential detail.
Follow-through on plans	Considerable	Moderate	M prefers to assume that all is well unless informed to the contrary; B is more dubious and wants to participate in each step.
Breaking bottlenecks	Considerable	Little	B jumps into the middle of the problem and tries to straighten it out; M relies on his staff to clear up difficulties.
Analysis of completed projects	Considerable	Little	M depends heavily on his staff aides to acquaint him with significant details; B is more likely to consider it his personal responsibility to have all the information on the tip of his tongue.
Changes and alterations	Little	Considerable	M feels that giving permission for change and modifications is a function of command; B wants results and leaves it up to the staff to discover the best way.
Keeping to schedules	Moderate	Considerable	M is conditioned to delays and experienced in explaining them; B is usually more cost- and competition-conscious and insists that schedules be closely maintained.

The Two Types Compared

In the main, the military-minded executive prefers the role of captain and director. He may well consider himself successful in proportion to the amount of responsibility he has delegated. The executive with a business background prefers taking a more direct hand in the operations of his staff. Although he may delegate rather freely, he reserves certain essential and critical operational areas for himself.

The executive of the military type is more often upset when procedural difficulties arise. Since he has delegated many key responsibilities, he is likely to be less able to resolve specific problems without a great deal of staff aid. The business executive, on the other hand, will tend to dig to the root of a problem himself and outline the steps to be taken after on-the-spot observations.

Thus the staff organization set up by the military type may tend to be overmanned. In the desire to be adequately covered, the military man may provide too much cover. The typical business executive, on the other hand, usually surrounds himself with only the minimum number of staff assistants and often tends to do too much himself.

For example, one of the authors found that, in a medium-sized company whose sales were about equally divided between government sales and commercial business, the head of the government-products group had a much larger staff than the head of the commercial-products section, as shown in Table 3.

Part of the disparity is accounted for by the fact that several of the government items were one-time products requiring original detailing and follow-through. On the other hand, it is also true that commercial products were subject to frequent changes, and—like the military products—required

continuing research for feasible new applications and new markets.

The government-products staff was also inflated because of government costing practices and the fact that most of the contracts were subject to either price redetermination or re-negotiation. There were also subsequent contract amendments calling for stepped-up delivery of certain contract items. But these considerations might be partially offset by the fact that the commercial-products group had a larger area to cover and many more different products.

TABLE 3. STAFFS OF GOVERNMENT-PRODUCTS AND COMMERCIAL-PRODUCTS EXECUTIVES IN A MEDIUM-SIZED COMPANY

Staff	Executive in charge of government projects, military background	Executive in charge of commercial products, business background
Staff assistants	7	3
Engineers	23	11
Clerks	9	4
Total	39	18

From the viewpoint of the man without a military background, the government-products group was undoubtedly overstaffed. But in the long-run the overstaffing may be less expensive than the understaffing of which the business executive is often guilty.

For the military-minded executive will often use his staff to establish:

1. Clear-cut lines of authority and responsibility
2. Coordination of line and staff interests
3. Records and covering memoranda relating to significant matters
4. Greater use of the conference method in resolving problems and determining lines of action

And the freedom from detail he achieves by making greater use of staff may enable him to spend more time with those under him and so promote good morale and *esprit de corps*.

There is no reason why the business executive cannot borrow the good from military concepts and dispense with those that will be somewhat detrimental. Because his whole training has been to the contrary, in fact, the business executive is not likely to fall into the habit of overdependence on staff that sometimes afflicts the military-minded executive.

7

The United States Presidency and the Staff System

Dwight D. Eisenhower is often credited with introducing the staff system into the White House as a carry-over from his military experience, and he has, in fact, strengthened and formalized it. But his predecessors, from sheer necessity, had been using staff systems of a sort for more than two decades.

“The office of the President,” Woodrow Wilson once said, “is so much greater than any man could honestly imagine himself to be that the most he can do is to look grave enough and self-possessed enough to seem to fill it.”

Yet up until the 1920's the President had almost nothing in the way of staff assistance. He had only a secretary and military and naval aides whose duties were largely social. Then there was a White House executive clerk with assistants to take care of correspondence and visitors. That was all. For advice or spadework on proposals, the President had to turn to Cabinet Departments.

The expansion of government activities that grew out of

the New Deal, World War II, the Korean conflict, and the long-drawn-out cold war made it impossible for the President to function at all with such a meager organization. But as the Hoover report on government reorganization pointed out,¹ acute need was earlier "... evidenced by the constant assignment of staff personnel from the [Cabinet] Departments to the White House, and an increase in the use of committees, commissions, and conferences to develop facts and policies for the President."

The President's staff, as it is now constituted, is made up of two branches: the Executive Office of the President and the White House staff. The former comprises such bodies as the National Council of Economic Advisers, the Bureau of the Budget, and the National Security Resources Board. The White House staff is made up of secretaries and assistants to the President, their deputies and assistants, plus the necessary clerical help—a group that numbers, all together, some four hundred persons. It is this latter group, formerly headed by "Assistant President" Sherman Adams, that most nearly performs the true assistant-to duties.

Dawes and the Budget Bureau

The first attempt to relieve some of the heavy burdens of the Presidency was through the Budget and Accounting Act of 1921, which created a Bureau of the Budget. Although this Bureau was placed in the Treasury Department, instead of directly under the White House, its director was made financial adviser to the President.

The first director of the Bureau, General Charles G. Dawes, brought with him to the office the military concept of staff work, and to a large extent he functioned as a chief of staff for President Warren G. Harding. Dawes had, in fact, refused the post of Secretary of the Treasury because he wanted general influence over government as a whole, not merely direction

of a single department. In a less conspicuous staff job he believed he could, with the backing of the President, have the same impact on the Federal government that he had had on the American Expeditionary Force in World War I, when he was coordinator of supplies for General Pershing.

Dawes understood very well that the Cabinet did not, and could not, function as a true staff group. In a letter to Herbert Emmerich, Director of the Public Administration Clearing House, (in 1948) he said:

Experience has shown that always in the mind of a department head the needs of his department take precedence over his conception of the needs of the Government as a whole.

Cabinet officers, instead of impartially carrying down the executive pressure behind a plan to bring governmental expenditures within governmental receipts, become a conduit for the carrying up to the Chief Executive of pressure originating with the Bureau Chiefs in their departments for increased appropriations and departmental independence.

Another White House staff member, who served much later, has expressed the same idea. Jonathan Daniels, who was a member of Truman's staff, has said: ²

I remember looking at the assembling Cabinet with a . . . expert in public administration. . . . "They're all pretty good fellows," he said, "and some of them are damn able men . . . But they act like commanders in the field and not like staff officers helping the President plan his strategy." Certainly it generally is a body of individualists, each intent on his own job first and the unified strategy afterwards.

Every business executive who is running a company of any size is likely to be all too cognizant of this psychological truth. Department heads are, and must be, mainly concerned with the showing of their own departments whether in government or industry.

Dawes was particularly concerned about the nominal location of the Budget Bureau in the Treasury and recorded: ³

I am glad to say that the Secretary of the Treasury walked upstairs to my office—one of his subordinate bureau chiefs—because he regarded it as necessary in connection with a call from me for information needed by the President of the United States. This will be an historic walk in the annals of the Budget Bureau.

Eventually Dawes arranged to avoid calling on Cabinet members in their offices and had them come to him instead, in the Cabinet Offices of the White House. This plan naturally enhanced the prestige of his position.

But Dawes was nevertheless careful to adhere strictly to protocol, and to act not in his own name but in that of his chief. All his orders were signed "By Direction of the President," and he adjusted formalities in line with the counsel of Edmund Burke ⁴ that "... politics ought to be adjusted not to human reasoning, but to human nature, of which reason is but a part and by no means the greatest part." "What gives the Director of the Bureau of the Budget his present powers over the routine administration of governmental business is alone the fact that he represents the authority of the Chief Executive," Dawes said in the letter to Emmerich quoted above.

In his work as Budget Director, Dawes was quite willing to use boards, but he insisted on boards of a particular type. Their function, as he saw it, was largely one of coordination. As he described them, they had no authority. Authority rested with the chief coordinator who presided over them, acting under executive authority, though the right of appeal to the Chief Executive would be preserved.⁵

After determination of policies by Congress, Dawes felt, the President had the right to make use of personnel from all executive departments in the most efficient manner possible. He believed that the President could, by executive order, as-

sign officials from any executive department to serve in the central coordinating machinery for as long as he needed them, and that during such a period they were as fully obligated as members of the President's own staff to serve his basic objectives.⁶

Dawes also insisted that the President's managerial staff should be completely nonpolitical, entirely divorced from policy making but thoroughly subordinated to political authority. He felt strongly that only with a staff of this type could the President of the United States deal successfully with the multitude of great problems for which he was personally responsible. He once remarked to Don K. Price, Associate Director of the Public Administrative Clearing House: "... while you tinker with all these gadgets [the increasingly complicated machinery of government set up by successive administrations], you don't do anything to provide for the clear exercise of responsible executive authority."

It is interesting to note that Dawes also suggested to Sir Josiah Stamp, formerly of the British Civil Service and later head of the London, Midland, Scotland Railway, and Sir Warren Fisher, former permanent Secretary of the Treasury in Great Britain, that a similar plan be set up for the British government. As a result, the Tomlin Commission report included the following paragraphs: ⁷

One witness suggested to us that provision should be made for a small section of highly trained staff whose duties should comprise independent criticism and coordination of the machinery of government. This suggestion was based upon a scheme in operation in the United States of America, where a small section of public servants is engaged upon these duties under the immediate control of the President.

We think that provision should be made for the continuous overhaul of the machinery of Government by a small specially trained staff recruited from the Service generally, and we recommend that

steps should be taken with this end in view. We recommend that this staff should be borne on the Treasury vote. . . .

This recommendation forecast the need for the Organization and Methods Staff of the Treasury Department, which was finally set up after the outbreak of World War II.

Dawes' own coordinating system, however, tended to disappear when he was no longer there to support it—though the Budget Bureau still continued to perform somewhat of a staff function.

Coolidge and Hoover

Calvin Coolidge, Harding's successor, was one on whom the burdens of the Presidency rested more lightly, perhaps, than on any man in the recent history of the country. The nation was at peace during his term of office, the postwar readjustment had been completed, and the tide of prosperity was running high. The country was content with things as they were, and there was little or no pressure on the Executive to strike out into new fields. Under Coolidge's policy of "masterful inactivity," in Harold Laski's phrase, the almost complete absence of staff in the White House caused no major difficulty.

Herbert Hoover, however, clearly recognized the problem that was building up and attempted to institute the rudiments of a White House organization. He increased the number of Presidential secretaries to three and departmentalized their work. He also sought to convert the military and naval aides into advisers on national defense.

Roosevelt's Staff

But Franklin D. Roosevelt was the first President of the United States to have anything like real staff aid. His much publicized corps of "brain trusters" served him informally in this capacity during his first term, and during his second term

formal provision was made for assistants to the President of the United States.

In January, 1937, the President's Committee on Administrative Management submitted a pathbreaking report, *Administrative Management in the Government of the United States*, which included recommendations in six major areas: (1) the White House staff, (2) personnel management, (3) fiscal management, (4) planning management, (5) administrative reorganization, and (6) accountability of the Executive to Congress.

The first of these areas is, of course, the one of greatest interest here. The committee pointed out that the Chief Executive was charged with a humanly impossible task; overwhelmed by details and needless contacts, he was yet responsible for coordinating the enormous activities of the Federal government. Specifically, it recommended that the President be given a number of assistants-to who would serve a true staff function—providing him with the information he needed for decisions and seeing to it that all those affected by the decisions were informed of them. These men, the committee emphasized, would not be, in any sense, assistant presidents; they would have no power to make decisions or to issue instructions in their own names. They should be, it said, men of great physical vigor and men who possessed the President's confidence, and they should have—a phrase that was widely quoted—"a passion for anonymity."

In line with these recommendations, the Reorganization Act of 1939 authorized an increase in the White House staff by six administrative assistants. It also transferred the Bureau of the Budget from the Treasury Department to the Executive Office of the President, thus giving it true staff status.

In addition, Roosevelt continued to use help from other branches of the Federal government. For example, at the time Harry Hopkins moved into the White House to become what

many referred to as “assistant president,” he actually held the job of Secretary of Commerce. Acting mainly as trouble shooter for the President, he gave his department only what direction he could deliver by telephone.⁸

The Truman Administration

The post of *Assistant to the President*, later made famous by Sherman Adams, was actually created not under Eisenhower but under Truman. Truman had, in fact, a much larger staff than Roosevelt. When he left office, Truman’s White House group consisted of 245 persons as against 67 during the previous administration.

The staff agencies in the Executive Office of the President also grew tremendously under Truman. Roosevelt had 390 persons in the Bureau of the Budget, 140 in the coordinating defense agencies. Under Truman, the Executive Office included nearly 1,000 persons:

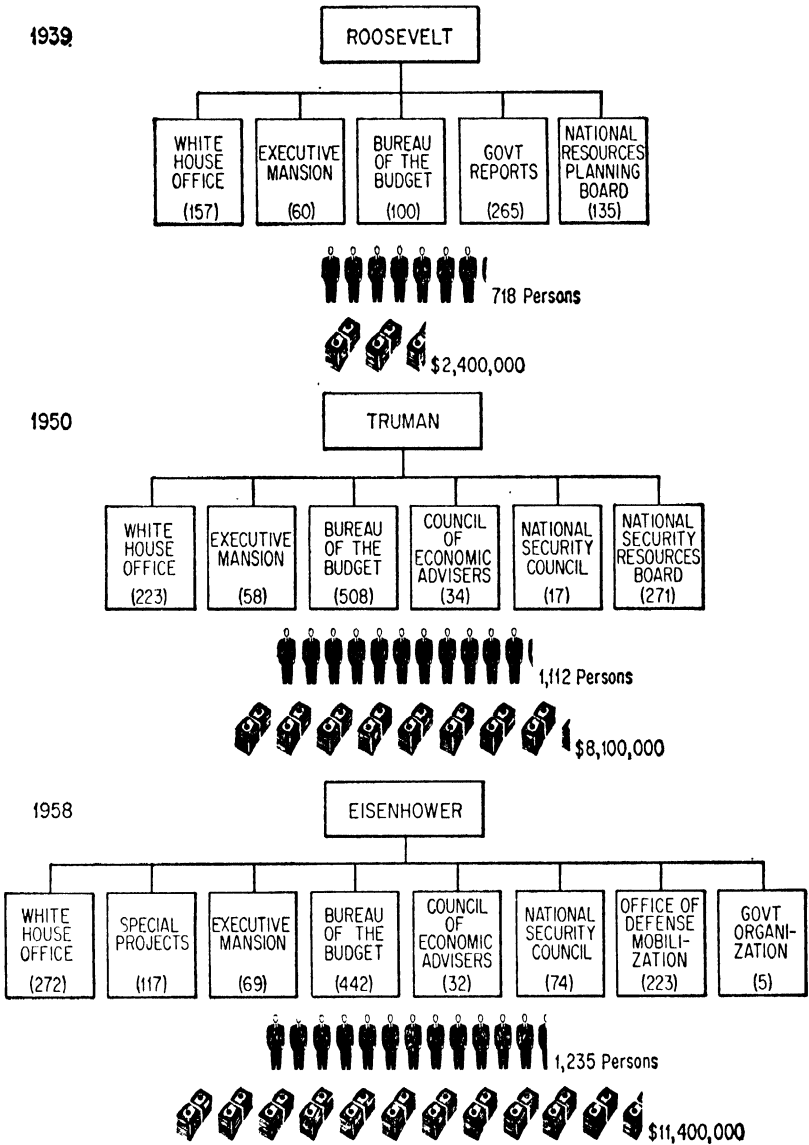
Bureau of the Budget	492	
National Security Resources Board	110	
Director for Mutual Security	96	
Council of Economic Advisers	33	
Office of Defense Mobilization	151	1
Psychological Strategy Board	28	
National Security Council	23	

Robert S. Allen and William V. Shannon pointed out:⁹

Truman has three secretaries, six administrative assistants, a legal counsel, two legislative representatives, three economic advisers, a Security Council secretary, and three military aides. There are also a score of young military officers assigned to White House duty as props for big dinners and diplomatic receptions.

Further, each of these assistants has at least one assistant of his own; some, like Dr. John Steelman and legal counsel Charles Murphy, have four apiece. This massive entourage takes up both the east and west wings of the White House proper and part of the

THE WHITE HOUSE AND EXECUTIVE OFFICE STAFFS—HOW THEY HAVE GROWN SINCE 1939



Figures on personnel are averages, and those for cost are totals, for the fiscal years shown. 1958 figures are estimates by Bureau of the Budget.

Figure 10

building across the street, which in Hoover's day housed the State, War, and Navy Departments.

Even as compared to the Roosevelt staff, there has been a phenomenal growth.

The coordinator of this "massive entourage" was Dr. John Steelman, Truman's chief assistant, but the coordination he exercised was, for the most part, informal. A good deal of his time was taken up with trouble shooting in labor matters. Moreover, according to one observer,¹⁰

Truman sat in with Steelman at staff meetings, and inevitably was snarled in those very commitments he sought to avoid.

As Jonathan Daniels wrote: ¹¹

The White House is . . . outside as formal as the architects could make it, but inside as informal . . . as a residence in which even the clerks are members of the family. . . . It is an informality . . . which has sometimes shocked the sense of neatness of experts in administrative management.

The Eisenhower Staff

In contrast, the Eisenhower staff is not only larger (yearly cost of White House and executive agencies was \$5 million in 1946; in 1957, \$10.4 million) but has been much more tightly controlled, especially during the regime of Sherman Adams, who, as Assistant to the President, acted as a true chief of staff. Moreover, the various assistants and special assistants were assigned specific areas of activity, principally domestic, while on foreign problems the Secretary of State dealt directly with the President.

Robert J. Donovan described the importance of Sherman Adams in this way: ¹²

The main difference between this and the previous operation of the White House staff lies in the immense but unwritten authority vested in Sherman Adams as the Assistant to the President. This office had existed under Truman, but it never carried such re-

sponsibility and power as Adams has wielded. With great exertion Adams has handled a considerable amount of work that in past administrations has been done by the President himself.

At Eisenhower's right hand . . . Adams has been the chief of staff in the White House and the overseer of the work of the executive branch of the government. . . . It has been the general practice that almost everything of importance in the White House bearing on domestic and political policy clears through Adams. . . .

Time and again when a caller or official springs an idea on Eisenhower, the President will tell him, "Take it up with Sherman." Almost invariably before Eisenhower signs his approval to a paper, he will glance over it for the familiar notation, "OK, S.A." If it's missing, the President will ask, "Has Governor Adams approved this?" And if the clerk who presents the paper wants it signed then and there, the answer had better be, "Yes, sir."

The job of chief of staff in the White House, Adams himself said, was ". . . neither to functionalize or institutionalize, but rather to departmentalize."¹³ To this end he held staff meetings almost every morning for coordination of the work.

Another of his jobs was to prepare précis on policy, detailing pros and cons, work that the Hoover report had recommended be assigned to a fourth Presidential secretary—if possible, a career public servant who would remain in office regardless of changes in administration. Others, it has been said, were to "needle officials to carry out policy, once fixed," "knock heads together, including Cabinet heads," "throw in rescue parties" when mistakes were made by Administration agencies, "hear top officials who come in to talk things over," and "act as Eisenhower's Grover Whalen" or official greeter.¹⁴ In other words, Adams acted as an extension of the personality of his chief in almost all areas of White House responsibility. And though, theoretically, all the assistants had direct access to the President, arrangements to see him were generally made through Adams.

One member of the staff, however, appeared to enjoy a

more independent and less coordinated status: James Hagerty, the President's press secretary, who had an office not far from the President's own desk and was authorized to break in on him at any time—even to call him in the middle of the night.¹⁵

Hagerty's job is much more important than that of his predecessors in the same office. Making arrangements for press conferences and briefing the President on questions likely to be asked are part of it, but many observers believe he also helps to determine the answers to an extent that constitutes making policy.

A typical comment is this one from *Newsweek* (August 6, 1956): "But it is abundantly clear that on matters affecting the Administration's public posture—and what matters don't?—Hagerty's opinion is a vital and sometimes determining factor."

The same article quoted Sherman Adams: "Probably more than anyone else in the President's official family, he relies on Jim for the testing of the new idea. He looks to him as the man to mirror the public reaction and in a large majority of cases would dispose of the matter then and there on the basis of Jim's judgment."

In addition to setting up a true chief-of-staff function, Eisenhower also created the position of *staff secretary* to coordinate the paperwork, or, as it has been said, to function as "White House office manager."

Another new staff post Eisenhower introduced is the *Cabinet secretary*, who, in conjunction with Department officials at the undersecretary level, prepares agenda for Cabinet meetings and later follows up to ensure that decisions made are properly understood. Minutes are taken at Cabinet meetings as a matter of course.

Earlier there had been no formal provision for this, though Jonathan Daniels¹⁶ mentions a Cabinet meeting at which ". . . Mr. Truman has provided the innovation of an agenda

for its sessions. He has brought in, as a sort of Cabinet secretary, one of his own Secretaries, Matt Connelly, who sits at one side taking notes."

Another difference between the Eisenhower staff under Adams and that of former presidents was that the Eisenhower group performed a good deal more of what is known as *completed staff work* (see Appendix D) than Truman's staff or Roosevelt's staff ever did. That is, staff members threshed out pros and cons among themselves and presented only a single recommendation for the Presidential decision. Anthony Leviero, writing in *The New York Times* of February 28, 1954,¹⁷ described how a statement regarding the Army-McCarthy feud was hammered out mainly by a special staff "task force" (with the Vice President, the Secretary of the Army, and representatives of the Defense and Justice Departments sitting in):

It was late afternoon by then. Mr. Adams, as usual, was at the center, the armed forces were represented by Mr. Stevens [then Army Secretary] and his superior, Roger M. Kyes, Under Secretary of Defense. Much of the President's political guidance comes from the so-called Thomas E. Dewey faction of the Republican Party. Its chief representative in the Administration is Herbert Brownell, Jr., the Attorney General, and he sent his deputy, William P. Rogers, to the conferences. James C. Hagerty, White House press secretary, was present. . . . Fred A. Seaton, a former Senator . . . and now Assistant Secretary of Defense in charge of legislative and public affairs, attended in a dual role of representing his department and advising on attitudes in the Senate. . . . Vice President Nixon also joined the group.

And to complete the group there were three members of the President's kitchen cabinet who specialize in Congressional liaison: Major General Wilton B. Persons . . . I. Jack Martin . . . and Gerald D. Morgan.

While this group was deliberating what should be done, the President was slamming out golf balls on the back lawn of the

White House. . . . He was probably working off steam. He works at high intensity anyway, and his doctor thinks he should take frequent breaks. . . .

The task force, after ninety minutes of intensive work, produced a five-paragraph statement. This was taken to the President in his study, after his practice golf was finished, by Vice President Nixon, Acting Secretary Kyes, Secretary Stevens and Mr. Adams. They emerged after a half-hour, the statement approved by the President.

Evaluation of the System

Since the Presidency is a political office, and anything a given President does is generally praised by his supporters and damned by the opposition, it is difficult to render judgment on the highly formalized staff plan that prevailed under Sherman Adams without being accused of political bias one way or the other. Therefore it seems best to point out some of the aspects of the plan that have been widely commented on and try to draw some morals for business executives who are using, or planning to use, an elaborate staff system.

It was generally conceded that, by and large, the White House staff during the Adams regime was highly efficient, and the fact that the business of the Federal government proceeded smoothly during the President's absence from the White House after his illnesses is evidence that it deserves this commendation.

Efficient operation of the White House is no mean achievement, considering the workload. The President is responsible for nearly threescore agencies and departments dealing with an enormous variety of activities. Every year he must sign hundreds of laws, appoint (nominally at least) literally thousands of people to office. He is, in fact, the head of one of the largest enterprises in the world—one that has more than two million employees (exclusive of the Armed Forces, of which he is Commander in Chief), 180 million stockholders, and a large and unwieldy board of directors (Congress) whose members, even those of the same party, are often not in agree-

ment among themselves. In addition, he is a ceremonial chief as well as the chief operating executive, and must make time for duties that in other countries are handled primarily by a monarch or a titular head of state. Finally—and this is inescapable in a democracy—he is a political chief, the head of his party in fact as well as in name, who must always to some extent calculate effects on party chances for reelection. But he cannot dictate a legislative program to his own party representatives in Congress; he must—by persuasion, by using his powers of patronage and his influence over public opinion—“sell” his program to his own party if he wants to get it through Congress. And both major parties in the United States contain almost all shades of opinion.

However, the criticisms and failures of the system are worth reviewing here since they indicate dangers that the chief executive of a private company must bear in mind in considering installation of a tightly knit general staff system.

Sherman Adams was forced to resign because of his seemingly inappropriate action in becoming involved in the affairs of an industrialist and accepting favors from him, but the basic criticisms are of the system itself rather than of any individual.

For example, the *U.S. News and World Report* in its issue of November 22, 1957¹⁸ quotes an official in close touch with the satellite project from the beginning

... It is more and more difficult for officials at the operating level to know whether or not those alternatives with their explanations, really reach the President himself. Within the White House, whole layers of people stand between those who do things and the man who makes the final decision. This makes it increasingly difficult to reach the source of authority. It is thus next to impossible to pinpoint responsibility for decisions that resulted in defeat of the U.S. by the Soviet Union in launching of a satellite.

The possibility that facts he needs to know will never reach him is something the business executive who contemplates

heavy reliance on a staff system must weigh against the undoubted advantages of more time to think, unhampered by details, and more time for essential recreation.

The more monolithic the staff, the more he may find the decisions for which he is directly accountable actually taken out of his hands. If an executive relies on a single staff member for a statement of pros and cons, he is, in effect, opening the way for the staff man to dictate the decision. Indeed, the latter may, in all honesty, do so unconsciously. To a man firmly committed to a given viewpoint, many of the arguments of the opposition may seem so insubstantial as to be hardly worth recording. Influence may be exercised also by the very language in which the arguments are noted.

Another criticism—more indefinite but nonetheless worthy of consideration—is that government (or management) is as much an art as it is an exact science. Thus the *Economist*, conservative British weekly, commented: ¹⁹

The new machinery [the Eisenhower staff system] has a high theoretical efficiency, looks pretty and sounds smooth at most speeds, but it has yet to match in quality of product the performance of older models made from salvaged parts held together with baling wire. . . . For improvisation, which can be brilliant, there is substituted over-elaborate thought, producing intricacies which Congress sometimes finds impracticable, illegal, and incomprehensible. The lesson is that the President ought not to be spared much more than routine; the inescapable requirement of the job is that it should saturate him and he should saturate the job.

A final argument against the use of a too coordinated staff has been well expressed by Jonathan Daniels.²⁰ It is one that company presidents may want to ponder: "No President likes to hostage himself to any one man. . . . [If he has many advisers] his whole mind belongs to him alone because of the fractional dispersion of his confidences."

These arguments, be it noted, are not arguments against the

use of staff as such, only against the use of one that is too tightly organized and funnels too much through the judgment of one man, and against too great detachment of the chief executive from the pressures of varying viewpoints.

After Adams' departure, Eisenhower may have recognized this, for the chief-of-staff duties in the White House were divided among several men, and the *primus inter pares* was General Wilton B. Persons, who by reason of his military upbringing appeared to be much more of a mere coordinator and handler of paperwork than his predecessor. That is to say, after Adams left (and with the death of John Foster Dulles, head of the principal Cabinet Department), the President took a much more active role in considering alternatives and in making decisions himself. He thus appeared to return more closely to the original model of his one-time mentor, General Marshall, who maintained a judicious balance between too much personal involvement and allowing the staff to make final decisions.

It seems possible that there is a limit to the extent to which one man can extend his control through the use of staff alone, and that a point eventually comes when only line reorganization will reduce the job to manageable proportions. Herbert Hoover implied as much when he suggested that the post of administrative vice president (or perhaps two of them—one for domestic affairs and a second for foreign affairs) be created to relieve the Presidents of the United States of some of the load.

One obvious answer in the case of the President of the United States, however, would be to remove some of the purely social duties from the President's shoulders—the time and energy consumers that have nothing to do with the real process of government. There was a time when any visitor to Washington could literally shake hands with the President. That ceremonial chore was dropped some years ago without

any protest from the public. A good many other social duties could probably go the same way.

In any case, something must be done to lighten the burden of Presidents of the United States if, as Hoover said, "we are to keep them alive."

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8

The Assistant in Business— A Composite Profile

Many uncomplimentary things are said about the general staff officer or assistant. “Palace guard,” “president’s lapdog,” “commissar,” “spy,” and “unproductive labor” are among the unflattering epithets sometimes applied. The assistant-to, many consider, is well described in Shakespeare’s words:

That never set a squadron in the field
Nor the division of a battle knows
More than a spinster . . .
. . . a mere prattle without practice
Is all his soldiership.

But in spite of all criticism, the general staff officer is a permanent institution in a very large number of companies, and each year the number increases. So even those who are completely opposed to the use of assistants-to need to know more about the job if they are to be familiar with the ways of business and its major organization problems.

In a survey of 300 companies in the United States, *Business*

Week (October 19, 1957) found that "...almost 70 per cent have an assistant to the president. In the vast majority of cases, the job and the title have been created within the past five years. Salaries range anywhere from \$10,000 to \$75,000 a year... and along with increasing use of the title, the powers of its holders seem to be growing."

Undoubtedly many companies have had excellent experience with the staff system. In some cases, the use of staff assistance has been a major factor in the success of the chief executive and the firm.

Unfortunately, however, because of the good assistant's "passion for anonymity," the confidential nature of his relationship to his chief in many cases, and the fact that neither the chief nor the assistant has time to explain the function, little or nothing may be known about the job or the men who hold it. In this chapter, therefore, an attempt will be made to draw a profile of the typical assistant to a top executive. In the last two chapters the conduct of successful and unsuccessful assistants will be analyzed.

The profile of the assistant-to is a composite of those attending five seminars held at the American Management Association under the chairmanship of the authors.

The Sample

Of these seminars for assistants-to, two were held for those associated with large companies (5,000 employees and over); three were held for those associated with small companies (fewer than 5,000 employees). Those who attended included assistants from eighteen large companies and thirty-two small companies, and twenty-five executives who held positions other than assistant-to—presidents, vice presidents, factory managers, etc. The large companies ranged in size from 5,000 to 250,000 employees, with the average about 15,000.

For the small companies, the size range was from 150 to 5,000, with the average around 1,500.

The industries represented by the assistants included:

<i>Name of industry</i>	<i>Number of assistants attending</i>
Engineering and machinery	8
Insurance	6
Petroleum	5
Electrical	5
Chemicals	4
Fuel and natural gas	3
Public utilities	3
Business machines	2
Steel and metals	2
Aircraft	1
Association work	1
Banking	1
Brass products	1
Brewery	1
Glass	1
Office equipment	1
Paper and board	1
Printing	1
Publishing	1
Rubber	1
Soap	1
Total	<u>50</u>

Thus the industries most frequently represented were engineering and machinery, insurance, petroleum, electrical, chemicals, fuel and natural gas, and public utilities. Most of the companies appeared to be highly profitable and interested in developing good management.

Background. The background of the assistants-to as sketched below is not necessarily representative of the average, or typical, assistant in industry. Our sample is far too small for such a claim. Furthermore, it is limited to members of the American Management Association; hence the practices and experiences

described are largely those of the more progressive segments of American industry. Those who came to the seminars were intent on exchanging ideas and improving themselves. It is not believed that they presented biased views, since the meetings were held confidential and conducted on the basis of complete friendliness. Many of the members presented their own background, achievements, and difficulties very freely.

The assistants-to at the seminars identified their positions as follows:

Position	Number	Percentage of total
Assistant to the president	18	} 40
Assistant to the president and vice president	2	
Assistant to the executive vice president	2	4
Assistant to the vice president—personnel	4	8
Assistant to the vice president—manufacturing or to the general manager	13	26
Assistant to the vice president—finance	1	2
Assistant to the vice president—sales	2	4
Assistant to the vice president—administration	7	14
Assistant to the company secretary	1	2
Total	<u>50</u>	<u>100</u>

Thus almost half the assistants attending the AMA seminars were working for presidents, one-fourth for vice presidents of manufacturing or general managers.

The average *age* at which assistants-to were appointed to their present position was 36.6 years in the large companies and 36.5 years in the small companies, or a little over 36.5 years on average for all the companies. This indicates a fairly substantial background.

The *number of years* which the assistants-to had spent in their jobs at the time of the seminar was 2.6 years in the large companies and 2.5 years in the small companies. This again

shows a very close similarity between the two types of companies. The "average" assistant had thus spent approximately 2.5 years in the position.

Next we ascertained the basic educational background of the assistant. In tabular form the breakdown was:

Education	Assistants in large companies	Assistants in small companies	Total
Up to and including high school	1	9	10
Up to and including college:			
Bachelor of liberal arts	2	3	5
Bachelor of business administration	5	6	11
Bachelor of science	3	5	8
Total	<u>10</u>	<u>14</u>	<u>24</u>
Up to and including university:			
Master of liberal arts	—	—	—
Master of business administration	2	—	2
Master of science	—	2	2
Law School	4	6	10
Doctorate	1	1	2
Total	<u>18</u>	<u>32</u>	<u>50</u>

These data show that 20 per cent of the assistants had gone no further than high school, but these were largely older men and from smaller companies. All the rest had gone to college or further. Almost 50 per cent had taken a bachelor's degree—22 per cent in business administration, 16 per cent in pure or applied science, 10 per cent in liberal arts. Eight per cent had taken a master's degree in business administration, and twenty per cent had gone to law school. Four per cent held doctorates. A higher degree had been obtained by sixteen assistants, or one-third of all those questioned.

In addition there were nine who had attended a college or university at night (largely those whose education had originally stopped after high school). Three had participated

in an advanced management course at a college or university. Two had participated at the AMA Management Training Center, two had taken part in an executive-development program inside their companies, and one had studied at a correspondence school.

About half the assistants had had military experience, as follows:

Branch of service	Assistants in large companies	Assistants in small companies	Total
Army	8	5	13
Navy	2	2	4
Air Force	3	2	5
Total	<u>13</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>22</u>

The bulk of this experience was in the line, but about a third had some experience in military staff work.

Only four had *government* experience, two in the FBI, one in the Pentagon, and one in the War Production Board. Several had had *consulting* experience.

Salaries. Forty-three of the assistants-to answered questions about their salaries. The information they gave, covering the preceding full year, was broken down into (1) basic salary, (2) bonus, (3) "fringe benefits," (4) stock options, and (5) expense allowances. Since the last two items were negligible, "total salaries" include only items 1 to 3.

There were eighteen replies from assistants-to in large companies:

Average salary	\$14,151
Median	\$13,000
Two lowest salaries	\$ 7,485 and \$ 8,200
Two highest salaries	\$27,421 and \$24,000

Of the replies from assistants-to in the small companies the following summary was obtained:

Average salary	\$11,599
Median	\$11,000
Two lowest salaries	\$ 7,000 and \$ 7,020
Two highest salaries	\$21,000 and \$19,300

Thus the average salary in the large companies was higher than the average in the small companies by approximately \$2,600, or more than 25 per cent. The medians differed by \$2,000. The range between the two highest and two lowest salaries in the case of the large companies was \$17,867 (\$7,843 to \$25,710); in the smaller companies, \$13,140 (\$7,010 to \$20,150). These salary data apply to 1953–1954. According to an AMA compensation study reported in 1957, assistants to presidents, classified by company size, earned the following amounts (this shows quite an appreciable jump):

<i>Company sales volume</i> (In millions)	<i>Salary range</i>
\$ 25–100	\$16,800–28,000
100–200	28,000–32,500
200–500	32,500–37,200
500 and over	37,200–38,000

Analysis of Time

Analysis of total workload of all assistants surveyed (forty answered in most cases, in some instances only twenty to twenty-five) was as follows (in terms of the leadership functions as analyzed in Chapter 3):

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Percentage of time spent</i>
Communication	23.5
Initiation	19.0
Coordination	14.0
Control	12.5
Planning	10.0
Forecasting	7.0
Representation	6.0
Organization	6.0
Direction	2.0
Total	<u>100.0</u>

The table shows communication to be the most important function, occupying almost one-quarter of the time of the "average" assistant. Initiation is second, taking almost one-fifth of the time; coordination is third, with one-seventh of the time; control is fourth, with one-eighth of the time; and planning is fifth, with one-tenth of the time. Direction is at the bottom of the list, and the time spent on it is negligible.

Representation. Representation includes public relations in the broad sense, that is, liaison with the various parties connected with the enterprise.

Of forty-one assistants who gave information on this subject, thirty-seven touched on some phase or other of representation; only four assistants had nothing to do with the function. In most instances a definite arrangement had been made to handle representation through a public relations department or through a designated executive, such as the head of personnel, industrial relations, or advertising. In many instances the assistant represents his chief, substitutes for him, prepares material, and writes his speeches. The percentage of time spent on representation among thirteen assistants in a small seminar was as follows:

<i>Percentage of total time in representation</i>	<i>Number of assistants reporting</i>
15-20	1
15	1
10	2
5	5
2	1
0	3
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Thus the majority of this group appears to spend relatively little time on representation, very much less than their bosses do, though it appears to be a definite, continuous, rather than and *ad hoc*, assignment.

Furthermore their participation appears often to be limited to the less important aspects of the function.

Organization. Of forty assistants who commented on their part in organizing, thirty-five were definitely involved. In only five cases was organizing a major assignment (in one case as much as 40 per cent of all time was spent on it). In most instances it did not appear to take more than 5 per cent. Generally, organizing was a special assignment of such executives as the treasurer, budget director, personnel manager, operations vice president, a procedures engineer, organization specialist, or a committee.

Directing. Forty assistants were consulted about their part in directing, as representatives of their chief. Of this number, eighteen took no part in it at all. The rest spent time indirectly as follows (as a percentage of total time):

<i>Percentage of time spent in directing</i>	<i>Number of assistants</i>
20-30	4
15	1
10	1
5	5
3	2
2	1
1	7
$\frac{1}{2}$	$\frac{1}{22}$

With a few exceptions, it is clear that the large majority of assistants engaged but little or not at all in direction (overall, they spent 2 per cent of their time on it). When they did direct, it was chiefly in connection with personnel and industrial relations problems, staffing, sometimes in control, as a deputy or as part of an added line function.

Initiation. Of the twenty-eight cases surveyed the time breakdown on initiation was as follows:

<i>Percentage of time spent in initiation</i>	<i>Number of assistants</i>
50 and over	2
40 and over	1
30	1
25	7
20	4
15	2
10	6
5	5
	<u>28</u>

Thus all spent some time on initiation—an average of 19 per cent. More than half the assistants surveyed spent at least one-fifth of their time on it; a tenth, 40 per cent or more. It was, therefore, a major activity for some of the assistants, largely because their chiefs had very little time to spend in starting new projects or ideas. The assistants dealt with initiation in such fields as research and development, market research, products, production methods, organization and procedures, and remuneration.

Forecasting. Of thirty-five assistants, twelve had no part at all in forecasting. For the remainder, the time distribution was as follows:

<i>Percentage of time spent on forecasting</i>	<i>Number of assistants</i>
50	1
30	2
25	2
20	2
15	2
10	8
5	4
2	2
0	12
	<u>35</u>

Of those spending time on forecasting, the greatest number appeared to spend about 10 per cent; the average, 8 per cent.

One-third spent one-fifth or more of their time on forecasting. It should be noted that forecasting in most cases was assigned to a special department—economics, statistics, market research, budget, finance, and (in one case) purchasing.

Coordination. Of forty assistants reporting their activities in coordination, all except two played a role. In the twenty-eight cases where a breakdown of time was obtainable, the following was shown:

<i>Percentage of total time given to coordination</i>	<i>Number of assistants</i>
33	4
25	3
20	5
15	4
10	6
5	3
2	1
0	2
	<hr/> 28

Average time spent on coordination was 14 per cent of total time. But it is noticeable that four assistants spent approximately one-third of their time on it, and about two-fifths spent 20 per cent or more of their time on it. In ten of the twenty-eight cases assistants played a minor part in coordination.

Planning. Time distribution was as follows:

<i>Percentage of total time spent on planning</i>	<i>Number of assistants</i>
35	2
20	4
15	4
10	5
5	8
4	1
3	1
2	1
0	5
	<hr/> 31

Average time spent on planning was 10 per cent. Of thirty-one assistants surveyed, eight spent 5 per cent of their time on planning. In ten other instances more than 15 per cent of the time was spent on planning, and a fairly substantial part of the time in five instances more. Planning was undertaken in conjunction with such groups as committees (planning, benefits, salary administration, top management), where the assistant might act as secretary or represent his boss, or by a special planning department in isolated instances.

Control. Time distribution in controlling was as follows:

<i>Percentage of total time spent on controlling</i>	<i>Number of assistants</i>
30	3
25	4
20	5
15	2
10	7
5	5
1	1
0	5
	32

Average time spent on control was 12.5 per cent. The highest number of assistants, seven, spent 10 per cent of their time on control problems. Over one-third spent 20 per cent or more of their time on control, five none at all.

Communicating. Time breakdown on communicating was as follows:

<i>Percentage of total time spent on communicating</i>	<i>Number of assistants</i>
95	1
80	1
65	1
50	3
40	0
30	2
25	3

<i>Percentage of total time spent on communicating</i>	<i>Number of assistants</i>
20	1
15	4
10	6
5	3
2	2
0	3
	<hr/> 30

The average time spent on communication was highest of all, about 25 per cent. Only three said they spent no time on it, and the median was around 15 per cent. Some of the upper brackets (80 and 95 per cent) were very high.

Such then are the activities of a fairly large group of assistants-to. But most of them still feel the need to clarify their titles, functions, and relationships. This is therefore the subject of the next chapter.

9

A Nice Derangement of Epitaphs

As is usual when men are involved in doubt and confusion about some aspect of their arrangements for working together, the problem of the use of assistants-to in business is embroiled in the use and abuse of terms. Words are confounded with facts, and the facts are more deeply confounded by identifying the word with the deed. What Mrs. Malaprop once described as “a nice derangement of epitaphs” has played a substantial part in the frictions and misunderstandings that have surrounded the use in business of positions bearing this title. Duties, responsibilities, and relationships make up the reality of any position in an organization. The title by which it is described is merely a shorthand symbol for these realities. But when men fail to identify or to understand the realities, they frequently cover up their feeling of discomfort by quarreling about the symbol that they cannot translate.

This tendency is as old as history. The earliest recorded ex-
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ample of the case method occurs in a discussion of management that took place more than two thousand years ago between the Chinese philosopher Confucius and his disciple, Tzu Lu: ¹

Tzu Lu said, "Sir, the Prince of Wei is waiting for you to assume the administration. What will you do first?" The master said, "The essential thing is to rectify the use of terms." Tzu Lu said, "What, Sir: You are speaking off the point. What has rectification to do with government?" The master said, "How unmannerly you are, Lu. When a man of breeding comes to anything he does not understand, he more or less blames himself. If names be not used correctly, then speech gets tied up in knots; and if speech be so, then business comes to a standstill."

As each profession has emerged from the mists of empiricism and customary practice, and has attempted to build up an organized body of knowledge as a guide to those practicing the art, the same difficulty has recurred. So-called "practical men" are impatient with attempts to be more precise about the definition of terms. They regard time expended in this clarification of communication as wasted. They do not weigh against it the time devoted to unnecessary arguments with their fellows about what are, in fact, differences not of substance but of interpretation. They do not recognize that much of the personal feeling generated by such arguments and the immense economic loss the friction involves can be traced directly to their failure to be exact about terminology or to relate the words they use to the objective facts that those terms are supposed to describe.

Business organization is a subject to which the spirit of scientific investigation has been directed only within the last half century. The study will make little progress unless men are prepared to be more exact in the use of terms.

Moreover, in this particular context, business suffers under a special handicap. Position titles define not only the individ-

ual's functions but also his status or rank. Discussion of such titles and their meaning is, therefore, in many cases gravely complicated by individuals' sensitivity to questions of status. The objective requirements of organization become subordinated to the subjective feelings of persons about their prestige. This is particularly true in regard to the assistant, both from his own viewpoint and from that of the executive who wants an assistant as a status symbol.

It is important to distinguish between the ideas of status (or rank) and function. While the exercise of highly responsible functions nearly always demands high and corresponding status, the reverse is not the case. Status (or rank), broadly a reflection of the esteem accorded to a man by his working group, is determined not only by the requirements of his present function; it is also, in part, a reward for his past achievements. In combat services, these two concepts are kept apart. While a younger officer performing important functions may be given corresponding temporary or acting rank for the time being, his permanent rank is determined not only by his current appointment but also by his past appointments and his seniority. Thus titles of status and titles of function are usually kept separate. A man will be a "corporal [rank] clerk [function]" or a "major general [rank] commanding a division [function]."

Titles of rank may, in these circumstances, acquire an air of unreality and even, for this reason, attract a certain contempt. They become medals or decorations rather than indications of the man's present authority. Nor is it always easy to resist the pressure to award more such titles than the objective requirements of the organization warrant. Though the multiplication of those holding titles of high rank beyond the numbers actually required always depreciates the value of such distinctions, there may be excellent reasons for increasing the number of high-ranking officers apart from the ambition of individuals for increased status.

Business has hitherto in part evaded this problem of status by refusing to recognize any titles except those of function. But so strong is the human desire for marks of distinction (often stronger in men's wives than in the men themselves) that this evasion may not prove a permanent solution. Already the title *vice president* is often used as a title of status (rank) rather than as an accurate definition of function. In many organizations all kinds of unofficial symbols, such as the use of a distinctive table or dining room, a particular parking lot, or the enjoyment of more luxurious office furniture, are accepted as tokens of status.

In the long run, business may be forced, as the combat services have been forced, to deal separately with these two concepts. With the growth of large-scale business organization there has developed a growing recognition that corporations must offer men more than a livelihood. Beyond a certain point, greatly reduced in recent years by the effects of taxation, the majority of men may become more interested in the approval of their peers, of which status titles are the outward and visible sign, than they are in greater financial rewards. Particularly when a man is approaching the age of retirement and has, perhaps, gone over the curve of his maximum utility as an executive, it may be most desirable to replace him with a younger and more vigorous personality. But he may well possess qualities of knowledge, wisdom, and experience that the corporation can ill afford to lose.

The appropriate action is often delayed or handicapped, to the disadvantage of all concerned, by status considerations, particularly if the man is somewhat short of the standing that would justify calling him a vice president or associate vice president. The corporation recognizes his years of service and has no desire to penalize him in any way because he shares in the universal human process of growing older—far from it. To change his functional title is to rob him not only of his present position but of the whole record he has accumulated by his

past service—a penalty he has not deserved and will bitterly resent. If it were possible to change his function without destroying his status, the problem would be greatly eased.

Under present conditions, however, it often can be solved only by *ad hoc* arrangements that, in fact, attempt to preserve the man's status in the group. But because they are *ad hoc* and not a normal part of the system, their effect in preserving prestige for the individual is often much diminished.

Both for this reason and because of the multiplication of unofficial status symbols, business may well be driven, in self-defense, to regulate its use of status rewards and to separate them from function, strong though the current feeling is against any such possibility. It has even been suggested that if the proliferation of unofficial status symbols is not brought under control, corporations may find themselves issuing gold, silver, and bronze keys to executive washrooms.

The two terms about which most misunderstanding exists in the present context are the words *assistant* and *staff*.

The word *assistant* is used in every possible permutation and combination in business terminology, from *assistant vice president* to *assistant janitor*. Its central and inescapable connotation is subordination to some other individual, the one who is assisted. Using the neutral term *chief* to denote this person, we find *assistant chief*, *assistant to a chief*, *administrative assistant*, *executive assistant*, *staff assistant*, *special assistant*, and so on. And in different companies the same title often means very different things.

Certain fairly simple distinctions may, however, be noted:

1. An *assistant chief* often occupies the organizational position shown in Figure 11A. He is definitely his chief's second-in-command. He is superior in status and authority to any other among his chief's subordinates. While his chief may deal with such subordinates directly and not "through" his assistant, he will usually keep his assistant informed; if he does not, the

assistant cannot usefully discharge his functions. In the chief's absence, such an assistant usually exercises the full authority of his chief and automatically replaces him.

2. An assistant chief may also be represented by the organizational pattern shown in Figure 11B. This usually implies a smaller distance in status and a closer degree of alternation between the chief and his assistant chief than usually prevail in cases under A in Figure 11. At the Continental Oil Company, for example, the regional and assistant regional managers of marketing occupy the same box, interchanging authority and representing one another.

These forms of organization have their uses, particularly if the chief is attempting to deal with a wide span of control. They have the disadvantage that they involve the principle of "one over one." If the assistant chief has no specified, individual duties and the chief is almost always present and possesses a vigorous personality, the assistant may be partially redundant.

It remains true, however, that the increasing complexity of business organization is involving executives at almost all levels in added burdens of external representation. This occurs with chief executives in the form of progressively larger demands on their time for public relations work. In departments within an organization, it means that an increasing proportion of the executive's time is absorbed in relations with other departments and, particularly in staff departments, with visits to other plants, attendance at meetings of professional societies, and so on.

Such calls on the individual's time may amount in total to the full time of a second man. Cases have been brought to the authors' attention where this is undoubtedly so, and the forms of organization have been fully justified, especially where the individuals concerned have been able to work with full mutual confidence. In large corporations it is not unusual to

find that the chief executive's job has been divided horizontally. Either an executive vice president has assumed much of the burden of internal administration, or a full-time chairman of the board has assumed many of the duties involved in presenting the corporation to the outside world. Double-banking of departmental executives may be necessary and for precisely the same reasons in principle, especially if there is a large volume of interdepartmental committee work.

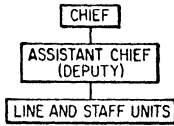
It is more doubtful that the title *assistant chief* is appropriate to such arrangements. An assistant who partakes of the whole of his chief's authority and automatically replaces him when he is absent is, rather, his *deputy*. There is, however, an objection to the position of deputy chief. It is frequently assumed that such positions are appropriate training grounds for succession to the chief's position; a deputy will nearly always feel that he has some moral claim to succeed his chief.

In a relationship demanding so much intimacy and mutual confidence, it is inevitable that the chief should be given some large voice in the selection of his deputy. But while some chiefs tend to choose deputies who are of like temperament and with qualities like their own, many more select as immediate assistants men of opposite or complementary qualities who modify and reinforce their own strengths and weaknesses. This is probably particularly true of chiefs with strong and forceful executive temperaments. In such instances, where the deputy is much like his chief, he is not likely to last long. Where he is of complementary temperament, he is likely to prove a disappointing successor.

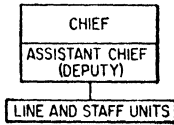
3. A third pattern of organization found with the assistant chief is shown in Figure 11C. Here the assistant takes charge of certain specific functions on his chief's behalf, in the instance illustrated (a manufacturing department), of the various foremen in charge of the actual manufacturing processes. His chief keeps the heads of specialized staff sections reporting

POSSIBLE STATUS OF THE ASSISTANT CHIEF

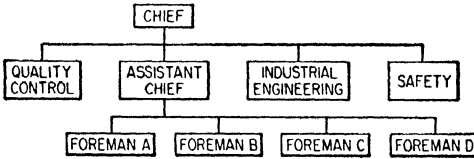
11A SECOND-IN-COMMAND OVER LINE AND STAFF UNITS



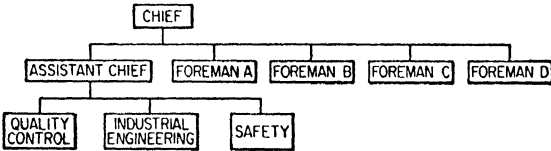
11B SHARING COMMAND OVER LINE AND STAFF UNITS



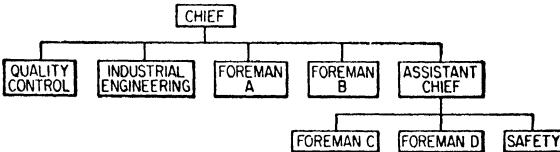
11C IN CHARGE OF LINE UNITS



11D ASSISTANT CHIEF IN CHARGE OF STAFF UNITS



11E ASSISTANT CHIEF IN CHARGE OF MIXED (LINE AND STAFF) UNITS



11F ASSISTANT CHIEF IN CHARGE OF SINGLE STAFF UNIT

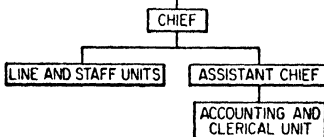


Figure 11

directly to himself and coordinates the work of the department as a whole. This is quite a common division of work in highly complex businesses. For example, in the plastics divisions of some large chemical companies the general manager with an administrative background may supervise operations and accounting, while an assistant general manager may supervise research, technical services, and marketing. An assistant carrying such duties is, in principle, in exactly the same organizational position as an executive vice president responsible for the operating functions of a corporation. In one large corporation, for example, the president supervises the staff functions, the executive vice president the operating functions.

4. Figure 11D shows an exactly opposite pattern, but one which is similar in principle. Here the manufacturing units are directly responsible to the chief, but he has placed his assistant chief in charge of all staff sections. In such instances, the assistant usually carries much of the responsibility for coordinating the work of the staff sections with that of the manufacturing sections. This is broadly the organization described by Frederick Winslow Taylor in "Shop Management,"² a system under which the assistant superintendent takes charge of the planning department and the four functional foremen working therein, while the superintendent directly supervises the foremen on the shop floor.

5. Figure 11E shows a further variety of this arrangement. The chief has found himself with an excessive span of control and has merely instructed his assistant chief to supervise certain sections of his department, selected because of the personalities involved and/or the assistant's previous experience, but not in accordance with any general principle.

In case C of Figure 11, it is probable that the assistant chief will be senior in status to any of his chief's other direct subordinates and will replace him in his absence. But this does not necessarily follow in cases D and E of Figure 11. The assistant

chief may be a comparatively junior officer, and the chief may then be replaced in his absence either from elsewhere in the organization or by a senior foreman in charge of one of the sections normally reporting directly to him.

6. There is another case, usually described as *administrative assistant* and illustrated in Figure 11F. Here the assistant is merely assigned a special function, very often—and especially in manufacturing divisions—a function in which his chief lacks experience, such as accounting and clerical work. In that case, as the chart shows, there may be an assistant chief in the same department. Usually, then, the administrative assistant is regarded as inferior in status to the assistant chief and probably lacks the manufacturing experience to replace his chief. He is, in principle, a specialized staff man.

In all the cases so far considered, the chief definitely delegates some of his authority; the assistant is directly responsible for the management of one or more of all the units into which the department is divided. These may be all (cases A and B, Figure 11), solely line units (case C), solely special staff units (case D), mixed special staff and line units (case E), or a single special staff unit (case F).

When we come to the *assistant to a chief*, it is fundamental to the concept of this position as a distinct form of staff organization that the chief does not delegate to the assistant any direct authority over any unit in the department. The position is shown graphically in Figure 12A. The function of an assistant-to is to assist his chief in carrying out his functions of direction and leadership and to help his chief's subordinates to understand the chief's intentions and to carry them out smoothly and effectively. The assistant-to is normally inferior in status to his chief's immediate subordinates. For this reason, he cannot replace his chief in his absence. He has no authority of his own. If he issues instructions to his chief's subordinates, it is as the representative of the chief's authority.

Cases frequently occur, particularly in smaller corporations, where the assistant to a chief holds a mixed position, as illustrated in Figure 12B. That is to say, he acts as an assistant to his chief and, in addition, assumes direct responsibility for one or more special staff functions, such as personnel or public

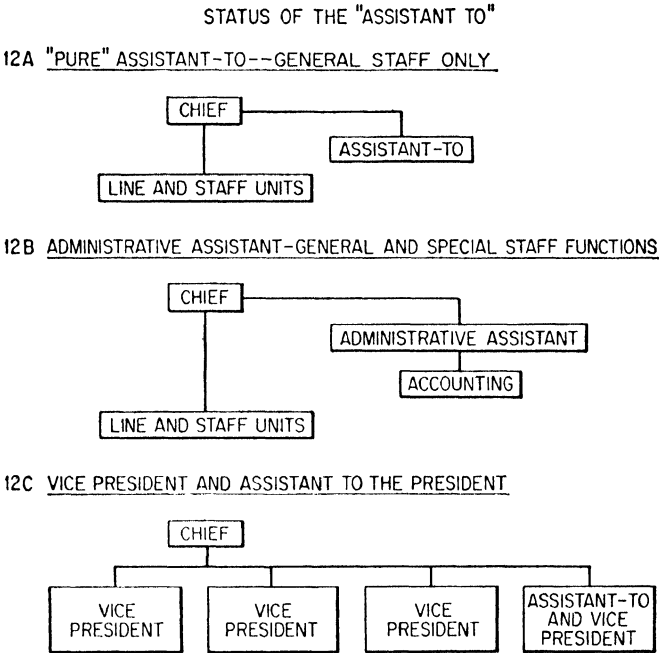


Figure 12

relations. Such an arrangement has the obvious disadvantage of blurring his relations with his colleagues. The latter are never certain whether he is communicating with them as an assistant-to with the force of his chief's authority or as the special staff head of one of the functions for which he is responsible. In the latter case he has the direct authority of his function, but only so much authority as his function is entitled to vis-a-vis other functions. Dual positions of this de-

scription are always difficult to maintain gracefully but may be unavoidable if a corporation is too small to sustain a full equipment of special staff functions. Even in such situations it is, however, preferable, if possible, to allow one person to combine two or three special staff functions rather than to mix special and general staff duties. Combinations of different functions are always easier for others to understand than combinations of different kinds of authority and responsibility. The latter force the incumbent to appear in the role of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

A number of cases are also to be found in American business where an individual is *assistant* to a president and a *vice president* as well. Here the success of the arrangement depends very much on the status and seniority of the assistant relative to the other vice presidents. If he is, in fact, the next senior person in the organization to the president, it is doubtful whether he can or should act as an assistant-to. He is likely to be more of a deputy president or executive vice president exercising direct authority over some of the other vice presidents and replacing the president in his absence. Such an arrangement is similar in principle to that outlined in Figure 11A and 11B.

There is, however, no reason why an assistant to a high executive should not be of high status and continue to function successfully in this capacity, provided the principal operating executives reporting to his chief are, some of them, his superiors in status and/or seniority. On the other hand, the vice presidents in charge of special staff functions may be of equal or lower status. This is the situation usually found in armies. A chief of staff often has the same rank as, a superior rank to, or higher seniority than the officers in charge of special staff functions. Even if this is not so, his position as chief of staff carries a prestige which is usually an effective barrier to any attempt on their part to "pull rank."

All these varieties of the use of the word *assistant* may be summarized under four broad categories:

1. **The Deputy Chief.** The man who holds this position is superior in status to *all* the chief's subordinates and automatically takes over when the chief is absent. When the chief is present, he delegates some part of the work to his deputy, usually different parts at different times.

2. **The Executive Assistant,** who is in charge of line departments and is superior to all other line executives except the chief.

3. **The Assistant Chief,** who is in charge of staff departments and is superior to all staff executives.

4. **The Assistant-to,** who is normally inferior to the chief's direct immediate subordinates and has no authority over them. If he issues instructions to the subordinates, he does so in the chief's name.

Or these broad categories may be used:

1. **The Deputy Chief** (defined as above)

2. **The Assistant Chief,** who handles either the line or the staff functions and is superior in status to all other executives in his jurisdiction

3. **The Administrative Assistant,** who handles one or two specialized functions

4. **The Assistant-to** (defined as above)

The term *staff* is the subject of even more ambiguities and misunderstandings. It has, of course, been transferred directly to business from military terminology. But the relationship of staff officers in armies, and particularly general staff officers, to their chief and to their chief's principal subordinates, is an extremely delicate one. It has been evolved gradually over thousands of years, and many mistakes and misunderstandings have occurred on the way, sometimes with the most disastrous results. Even within the present century eminent soldiers have clearly failed to understand essential features of this relationship.

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that business should have encountered difficulties in attempting to apply the staff concept. It lacked "knowledge of acquaintance"³ with the varieties of functions and relationships covered by the term in military practice. People were frequently appointed to so-called "staff positions" with no training whatever for staff duties and no conception of any kind of relationship or form of authority other than the direct relationship and authority of line executives over subordinates.

Nor is it any more surprising that professors of business administration, basing their analyses on observation of business practice, should have added to the confusion. Some of the definitions of *staff* in books on management are given in Appendix A.

What appears to have happened is this: Early in the present century business was caught short by the need for rapid and increased specialization caused by the pace of technological development and business growth. Specialization spells more exact knowledge, and more exact knowledge spells greater effectiveness. There had to be more specialists, and such specialists had to be used. But the introduction of any kind of new specialization into any going organization is always a delicate operation. After all, the work of the specialist has always been done before, somehow or other, by someone; possibly it has been done in the twilight of half knowledge, but still it has been done. And the "someones" quite invariably are only too prepared to feel that their experience is considerably more valuable to the organization than the specialist's new-fangled notions. They are very ready to resent his advent, to regard allotment of any functions to him as an infringement of *their* authority.

The classic example is, of course, the story of Florence Nightingale and her idea that the function of military nursing should be specialized. That sounded revolutionary enough to the pundits of the British Army Medical Corps, who had

previously entrusted it to untrained orderlies under *their* command. But, piling Pelion on Ossa, she also suggested that it should be done by women, even ladies, and the idea of ladies in a military hospital at the seat of war seemed to them anarchic. When Miss Nightingale and her devoted band of helpers turned up at Scutari in the Crimea, the things they said about her and them were unprintable.

She was a lady of gentle ways but inflexible character, and she won through. There is one story that, with thousands of sick and wounded dying of cold in the hospitals, she needed shirts. Shirts had arrived, but the consignment could not be opened without a board of audit, and the purveyor (supply officer) said that a board of audit must include a general officer and would take three weeks to assemble. Miss Nightingale, who was worshipped by the men, called up a corporal's guard and opened the bales of shirts forcibly with a hatchet while "... the miserable purveyor stood by, wringing his hands in departmental agony." ⁴

Today it seems inevitable and natural that military nursing should be done by women specialists. But then it seemed just as absurd and unnatural as the introduction of many of the forms of specialization in personnel, industrial engineering, research, and so on, to which business is now well accustomed, appeared to line departmental managers and foremen early in this century. They opposed their introduction lustily, and progressive business leaders who realized the necessity for these innovations if their undertakings were to survive were hard put to it to prevent their organizations from disintegrating into warring fragments.

Of course mistakes were made. Too many new specialists were appointed without adequate preparation of the ground; their duties were not defined, and others were not told, except in the most general terms, why they were there. Too often initial enthusiasm expressed itself in the admonition that

“quick results” were expected of them. Many of them were unaccustomed to practical industrial conditions; they were young, aggressive, arrogant, clever, and not overendowed with tact.

So the fur flew, and harassed chief executives in business after business were driven into a hysteria of assurances that staff specialists were not meant to do what they had manifestly been hired to do. The line managers were solemnly told that the staff men were “purely advisory” and that no one need take their advice if they did not want to—a glaring example of the irrational, since serious boards of directors and presidents do not engage expensive specialists with the idea that their other colleagues should ignore them at their pleasure.

But as a consequence of these growing pains, all the emphasis in the early days was concentrated on saying what the staff specialists were *not* to do, in order to avoid friction with the line. Few people, though there were exceptions, directed their attention to the constructive task of defining what they were to do positively. Certainly few stopped to inquire whether there was more than one kind of relationship comprehended in the term *staff* as used in armies.

Hence the crop of vague and contradictory business definitions. Most of them combine, or try to combine, bits and pieces of two or three different kinds of positions and relationships which are, in part, mutually incompatible.

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² In *Scientific Management*, Harper and Brothers, New York, 1947, pp. 98–99.

³ Compare Elton Mayo, *The Social Problems of an Industrial Civilization*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass., 1945, p. 115.

⁴ Lytton Strachey, “Florence Nightingale,” in *Eminent Victorians*, Chatto & Windus, London, 1918, p. 133.

10

Case Studies of Unsuccessful Assistants-to

No! I am not Prince Hamlet, nor was meant to be;
Am an attendant lord, one that will do
To swell a progress, start a scene or two,
Advise the prince; no doubt, an easy tool,
Deferential, glad to be of use . . .
Full of high sentence, but a bit obtuse;
At times, indeed, almost ridiculous—
Almost, at times, the Fool.

T. S. ELIOT, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*

Where the assistant to the chief executive does not fulfill his primary purpose—relieving the burden of the chief—or where he actually disrupts the smooth functioning of the organization, the causes are fairly clear-cut.

A few years ago the American Management Association in-

investigated (by means of workshop seminars and private interviews, conducted by the authors, with assistants-to and their chiefs) the way in which assistants to high executives in some 140 organizations were functioning. In the cases where the assistant-to was not working out well, lack of success could be traced to one or more of the following causes:

1. *The duties of the assistant-to had not been defined.* "Just come into my office and see where you can be of help to me," the president had told him.

2. *Relations with other executives had not been made clear.* "You may find Mr. Smith a little difficult, but you'll know how to handle him."

3. *Not enough attention had been paid to the selection of the assistants.* They lacked training or adequate experience in line jobs. In a number of cases, the authors found that young men were imported as presidential "brain trusters" immediately after taking their degrees. Those who have studied for six or seven years sometimes aim high and hope to get into top management by starting as assistants-to. In some cases, the character of the assistant left much to be desired.

4. *Executives failed to distinguish between general staff and specialist functions.* In consequence the assistants themselves had too much to do and so were unable to relieve their chiefs of many burdens.

5. *Executives failed to distinguish between personal and general staff functions.* Private secretaries and personal assistants tend to be apprehensive when an assistant-to is appointed. This is in part fear of the unknown, of the difficulties of adjusting to a new person. In part, it may be jealousy of the attention the chief gives the assistant. Also, the personal assistant or secretary may have been acting partly in a general staff capacity—handling the paperwork, acting as an interpreter, and communicating the chief's intentions to his immediate subordinates. Hence, when the assistant's job is defined,

the private secretary's job and the relationship between the two functions should also be defined.

6. *Assistants-to were used almost exclusively on new or special projects.* Thus they had no time to relieve their chiefs of routine.

7. *Executives attached too much importance to paperwork and refused to allow the assistants to handle it for them.*

8. *The assistants were allowed, or even directed, to report (sometimes overtly, sometimes covertly) on the work of their chiefs' subordinates whose status was higher than their own.* As a result, the subordinates joined forces against them.

9. *Executives who had worked out a reasonable relationship between their assistants and their principal subordinates then went away for long periods without nominating any senior officer of the organization to "answer" for them in their absence.* This placed the assistants-to in an embarrassing position. They had either to act for their chiefs—and so arouse opposition—or do nothing, leaving all the problems to accumulate.

10. *Assistants-to were left in the position too long and felt that their prospects were uncertain.* The authors found a sense of frustration among a number of assistants because of this. There was a widespread feeling among them that an assistant should be a picked man with an assured future in the organization, and that he should be moved back into the line as soon as the training value of the position had been realized. After four or five years, at the most, they believed, the assistant-to should be moved into the line at an executive level just below that of the chief's immediate subordinates.

11. *Assistant-to positions were a dumping ground for the "organization's problem children,"* and so lost status in the eyes of the rest of the organization—with the result that able young executives avoided the job.

One of the least discussed but major problems of American

management is the executive who is no longer able to do a satisfactory job in his present position. Industry no longer wants to "fire" such men. It fears adverse reaction from other executives—who may leave the company in consequence or hold their services to a minimum. It fears adverse reaction from the local community as well—perhaps protests from important groups. Business also recognizes its obligations to men who have rendered many years of faithful service, and knows that such men may have heavy financial obligations (mortgages, insurance premiums, relatives to support) and that, even if they have not, demotion is likely to be a crushing blow to them. Some companies have, therefore, resorted to creating assistant-to positions for unsatisfactory executives with high seniority. There is a new office "upstairs," complete with all the status paraphernalia. Since the job is made to appear a promotion, and may even carry an increased salary, the executive's pride is saved. And since the position, by definition, carries no authority, he can do no harm.

But generally such a move will not solve the problem. Unless the executive was miscast in his previous position and is, in fact, a good general staff man, his contributions will be no greater than before, and the company will be paying him the same or a higher amount for them. Worse, he may waste a good deal of his superior's time by being constantly around, anxious to "talk about the weather." He may interfere with other executives, or become discontented and exert a dragging effect on the organization.

In many instances it would be better for the company to help such a man find a position elsewhere, to pension him off before the age of sixty-five, appoint him consultant, or let him travel and study new material resources or commercial possibilities. These are expensive alternatives, but they may be less costly than appointing him an assistant-to without duties or responsibilities.

12. *Having an assistant-to may become a status symbol.* As an executive rises through the ranks, he likes to acquire the symbols of importance. Some of these are inexpensive, like a special parking lot, the privilege of eating in the executive dining room, a carpet, or perhaps the key to the executive washroom.

As he goes higher, his need for what amounts to "conspicuous consumption" of symbols continues to grow. First there is the private telephone, then the private office and the private secretary, and finally the assistant.

And as the assistant rises with his chief, one of his major functions may consist of making his superior's job more important—increasing forms and paperwork, "extending communications," "program planning," "coordination," etc. As the assistant's work increases he, too, gets a private secretary and then his own bevy of assistants.

The increase in administrative expense may be justified, but in some nationally known companies everyone who considers himself an executive has his own assistant or a group of them (including both assistants-to and deputies). Then the only way to get rid of the custom is to abolish all the assistant positions, for if exceptions were allowed, the evil might never be rooted out.

The following case stories of unsuccessful assistants-to illustrate how these mistakes and misconceptions destroy the value of the position.

CASE 1. *Failure to define duties of the assistant-to—plus lack of experience on the part of the assistant.*

A plastics company was started during World War II and soon grew from a small organization to one with more than ten thousand employees. The president had to spend almost all his time on product development and contacts with government officials. This cut into his free time, especially the time

he had formerly devoted to golf and fishing. Feeling terribly overburdened, he hired a young man straight out of business school as his assistant.

The young man, Henry Henderson, received absolutely no instructions about what was expected of him, how he was to conduct himself, how he could best assist the president. Naturally he felt very much at sea, and since the president was seldom around, it was difficult for the assistant even to see him.

Casting about for a way to make himself useful, Henderson noticed that mail was piling up on the president's desk, and decided to answer it himself. He wrote letters and left them for the president in a file. But the president never looked at them.

Finally Henderson summoned up the courage to interrupt the president during a conference and asked him to read over the very urgent mail. The president simply blew up and told his assistant to come in only when he was called for. Since then the assistant has been without work, and his early removal is likely.

CASE 2. Neglect to define relationship to executives.

A former school teacher was employed initially in the personnel department to aid the training director with sales training. After a year he was transferred to the post of assistant to the vice president in charge of sales. The vice president, a very busy man, neglected to define the assistant's functions and his relationship to line subordinates.

The line subordinates were very suspicious of the assistant. Some of them had protégés of their own who, they felt, should have been appointed to the job. Others were afraid that the assistant had been sent to spy on them. None of them knew exactly what his functions were.

A further difficulty arose when two smaller companies were acquired and the assistant-to was asked to help in the mergers.

There were changes in functions; people were shifted; some major executives were retired; sales territories were revised. The major job of the assistant-to throughout the merger was to study selling and administrative expenses. He found that the selling expenses of most of the vice president's subordinates had risen faster than their sales or profits and, of course, brought this fact to the attention of his superior.

The subordinates resented what they felt to be spying and refused to give information. They finally persuaded the vice president in charge of sales that the assistant-to had made mistakes in calculating selling expenditures; so the vice president in charge of sales hired another assistant to check on the first one's work. This led to difficulty between the two assistants and eventually to utter confusion. The vice president finally withdrew all work from his two assistants, and both of them left the company in disgust.

CASE 3. Neglect to define either duties of the assistant-to or his relations with executives, and allowing the assistant to spy on executives.

Bill Beaty had had engineering training at college and after graduation had joined a medium-sized food company, working first on the shop floor, then for a number of years as a foreman. Later he became a draftsman and was eventually appointed assistant superintendent. He built up a good production record, attracted the president's attention, and was appointed his assistant.

Neither Beaty nor the president's immediate subordinates were informed of the assistant's duties, relationships, or authority. In fact, the president's subordinates heard about the new position for the first time when they received an "order" from the assistant to change their budget proposals. Beaty was unable to shake loose his past experience of command; in fact, he had not been told he should do so. From then on, the

subordinates received one command after another from him.

The president devoted less time to his subordinates than before, and they, in turn, became increasingly resentful. They gave the assistant the minimum cooperation they could get away with, and boycotted him whenever possible. Finally, in desperation, they made one of the vice presidents their spokesman and began to make suggestions aimed at curtailment of the assistant's direct authority.

Some of these suggestions were accepted, and Beaty felt bitter at what he wrongly conceived to be a demotion. He sought vengeance by finding out what was wrong with his chief's subordinates, with their performance and their relationships with each other, and he reported to the president anything adverse he could pick up. In this way he played the "grey eminence behind the throne." Since he could not issue orders directly, he would command through others.

Finally, the embittered subordinates laid a number of well-concealed traps. They withheld information from the assistant, then showed the president that the assistant was not doing his job. Eventually Beaty was fired.

CASE 4. Poor selection of assistant, failure to train him or to make his position clear.

A recent graduate of the Ivy League, with a business school degree as well, became assistant to the president of an oil company after leaving college. His family background was of the best; he had been reared in a liberal arts tradition and then added two years' study of general management. He refused to take any post but that of assistant to the president, even though he had no business experience of any kind.

Most of the president's subordinates had come up through the ranks and had many years of practical experience in the petroleum business. The assistant considered himself a cut above them because of his position (which he believed higher

in rank) and because of his education. He ignored and snubbed the executives when he did not need them. He commanded them when he wanted information from them. When asked for his advice or opinion, he was evasive, quoted big principles or glittering generalities. When given an assignment, he tried to avoid it or attempted not to give a clear-cut answer. When pressed, he was in the habit of applying literally what he had read or learned at school. In case of failure, he "quoted the book" or indicated that it was beneath his dignity to discuss such matters. He used stilted jargon on many occasions, and quickly earned the reputation of being academic and theoretical.

He persisted in error and refused to learn from experience. Even his deferential behavior toward his chief and his uncommonly thick skin did not save him for long, and his departure spoiled opportunities for many able business school executives.

CASE 5. Poor selection of assistant.

After a mediocre career at law school, Henry Brown was too diffident and too unsure of his own abilities to set up in private practice. His corporate career was undistinguished. He advanced by carefully avoiding all responsibility and thereby avoiding mistakes as well. He exhibited a doglike faithfulness to his boss and did to the letter what he was supposed to do, being particularly careful about minor details because they were the things he felt most competent to deal with. He was most attentive to the foibles and peculiarities of his boss and flattered him constantly. He also studied his boss's associates and did little things for them. Early he learned to associate only with the "ins" and to be the first to snipe at the "outs." Above all, he gained a reputation for careful handling of papers—vast amounts of papers.

After several years of this service, he moved upward with

his boss and finally gained the attention of the chief executive. He became the chief's handyman: passing on documents and orders, keeping minutes, setting up agenda—a Jack-of-all-lowlly-trades.

But he was now a small power himself. All the things he used to do for his boss—acting as a doormat when the boss was in a bad temper, tapping the gossip of the washroom, preparing drinks, seeing that hunting lodges and cabin cruisers were prepared for the boss's visits—he began requiring his subordinates to do for him. He demoted people without cause, kept executives uncertain of their status, refused to authorize sale of company merchandise at discounts except to his own "lap dogs," broke promises—in general, made up for his years of obscurity by a display of arrogance.

Fortunately for the company and the sanity of the executives, Brown's boss retired after two years, and now Brown is back where he started from—carrying papers from one office to another. The only difference is that he now wears a green eye shade—he is afraid to look people in the face.

CASE 6. *Failure to distinguish between general staff and specialist functions.*

An assistant to the president and legal counsel tells this story:

"I began in this position about four years ago; there was no job description since the post was created at that time. The man who was president was a lawyer. I had worked with him for a number of years, and I merely continued to do so. Perhaps my principal difficulty was that I was assigned different types of staff functions which were all treated alike, and the impact on all those affected thereby was quite confusing, to say the least.

"I ferret out information on both operating and policy problems and get it into such shape that the president can act on it.

In addition, the president of our company does considerable work on our industry committee; and other executives and I do considerable work for him in that capacity. We have created a water committee in our state to study the water problem, and I attend for the president. A small group of matters have been unofficially delegated to me—such as complaints arising from sales—which are normally handled with the departments involved.

“Another function of my office is the spadework: preparation of speeches and various papers for the president. In some organizations that type of activity is assigned to public relations people, but our president has a fondness for profuseness, and I am able to help him with speeches to the public and technical papers.

“Then there is a wide range of functions involved in keeping the president up to date. I read the information handed to me on what is going on in the country, the industry, and the state. Because of our relationship, I am able to counsel with him in a special capacity. Answering the mail in an organization of our kind takes considerable time. We have numerous requests for contributions, various trade assignments, etc., and all of that flows to me. In addition, I retain some of the responsibilities of the general counsel along with one other assistant who does most of the work. I do special work on special problems.

“The over-all problem is: How can an assistant, such as I am, better function and better relieve the chief executive of duties he wants to be relieved of? I feel that I am not relieving him of the *real* top-heavy burdens and that much of my time is spent on extraneous matters.”

CASE 7. *Failure to distinguish between personal staff and general staff.*

Jim Sorenson was a very bright young man who had taken his college work in psychology. He had considerable experience

in that field and in art and journalism. At the age of thirty he became assistant to the president of an advertising agency.

The chairman of the board of the agency was a brilliant but erratic man who changed his mind too often to achieve permanent success. For example, he frequently fired his research people or refused to accept their suggestions—with the result that most of the research produced little of value. He refused to accept criticism, was often absent from the firm, played one man against another. The president of the agency was largely “in the chairman’s pocket,” because his salary was \$100,000 a year plus bonus and he would not take the risk of crossing his superior.

Sorenson had been with the agency five years when he persuaded the president to make him an assistant.

Essentially, Sorenson used his job to do things for the other executives through the medium of the president. He got them salary increases, higher bonuses, or better jobs; saw that they obtained medical services, psychiatric treatment, legal counsel, and other free services. He also attempted to anticipate the needs and wishes of his boss.

He was told to think up a present for the chairman of the board on the occasion of the latter’s seventieth birthday, and hit on the idea of having a musical composition praising the chairman’s qualities written by one of the great composers of the world.

The musical composition was a hymn of praise. The assistant hired an orchestra and Metropolitan Opera stars to perform it at the Waldorf-Astoria in the presence of all the executives of the agency and the clients. The assistant also arranged for a large-scale foundation to be presented by the dealers to one of the universities in the name of the board chairman, and he himself gave a scholarship in the chairman’s name. He saw to it that the chairman’s secretary got the right gifts—the right jewelry from Tiffany’s, for example.

Unfortunately, all Sorenson’s efforts to make the chairman

of the board an outstanding public figure were unsuccessful; he also failed to make him popular with the executives. The root of the problem was that he was unable to change the chairman's arbitrary attitude. Subsequently the president fell out with the chairman of the board and was fired, and the assistant automatically went with him. The assistant dourly observed that he did not even get a convertible, which he had thought was the least he might expect from the chairman of the board.

Sorenson's code of behavior as personal assistant roughly boiled down to the following propositions (used as the occasion warranted):

Essentially, the job of the president is such that he has no one but God to talk to, and since he cannot talk to God, he must talk to the assistant.

You must know how to ride out the storms.

Your life isn't your own.

You have no operating power and therefore have to work on your charm.

You must never say anything against the president or against anybody.

You must learn how the boss thinks.

You must never cease to be independent—that is, up to a point.

Never tell your boss anything in front of others—he might resent it.

You must take no more responsibility than a clerk if you don't want to be shown up.

Essentially, after all, you have to remember you work for an egotist; so you have to work on his ego.

It is important to spend week ends with him, have lunch with him frequently, call him at the right opportunity or write him notes.

Alcohol is the assistant's best management tool.

CASE 8. Failure to distinguish between general staff and personal staff, or to define the relationship between the assistant-to and the private secretary—plus poor selection of the assistant.

A young man with considerable production experience was appointed assistant to the president of a medium-sized company. He insisted on having the office next to the president, ousting the private secretary on the ground that he, being the extension of the chief, should cover office facilities as well.

Next, the assistant attempted to appropriate as much as possible of the private secretary's time. As a result, the secretary was unable to do all the work assigned by her chief. The assistant used this apparent shortcoming as an argument that the secretary was no longer adequate for the job and induced the chief to let her go. He then hired a new secretary for the president, and since he made her believe that he was her real boss, she did his bidding.

In this way the assistant got access to, and control over, all the chief's incoming and outgoing mail. Next, he got the power of making the chief's appointments, which had been arranged by the private secretary. In this way he kept his enemies from seeing the chief and permitted access only to those who were friendly to him and would speak well of him.

Finally, he got control of his chief's confidential files, again through the private secretary. He used apparently incriminating documents to blacken his chief with the board and got him ousted. The assistant was then elected chief executive himself, and took good care to control his own private sec-

retary. However, he brought about his own end by falsifying financial statements, and this was discovered by the auditors.

CASE 9. Using the assistant almost exclusively on special projects, and so giving him no time to relieve the chief executive of his daily burdens.

In a large public utility company on the West Coast the president had previously been the legal counsel. On becoming chief executive he took with him as assistant one of his former associates, Robert Wall. But he failed to relieve Wall of all his old assignments. So the assistant started out with a number of long-range legal research problems that required considerable study, research, and interviewing.

The new chief executive was anxious to demonstrate his far-sightedness and asked his assistant to prepare "plans for 1975"—production, marketing, personnel, finance studies—and gave the assistant some other assistants to do the "leg work." But planning, coordinating, directing, and checking on the progress of these studies alone were very time-consuming.

Next the president was anxious to attract industries to the area of operations of his utility. He assigned his assistant the task of researching for prospective customers, planning the campaign, getting interest and support from the municipal authorities, local chambers of commerce, prominent citizens, etc.

This project led to the more immediate one of making the president better known in his local community. Wall now had to arrange for meetings, prepare speeches, deal with public relations counsel, and the press.

The president also had extensive private hobbies—stamp collecting, studying Civil War history, running a profitable farm, building up a local United Nations organization—and here also the assistant had to lend a hand in laying long-range plans and in solving current emergencies.

The net result of this was not only that the assistant was unable to help his chief on current problems; he himself was so overburdened that he suffered a breakdown.

CASE 10. *The assistant left in his position too long.*

The frustrations of Assistant George Horan are unusual, but his story will illustrate some of the problems that arise with assistants of long standing. Horan, now fifty years of age, began life as an "assistant" in a kindergarten at the early age of three, when older children made him wait on them. And so it continued in elementary and high school. Horan tried to get protection from the teachers and soon became teachers' pet, doing little things for their comfort. In college, he became assistant to one of the professors, first doing his typing and checking his footnotes, and then helping him write his books. During the summer vacations, he worked as an accountant for various companies and got a job as assistant to the controller after he took his degree. He rose through the various executive ranks as an assistant and finally became assistant to the president. Horan has always done his job faithfully and competently. Yet he is an unhappy man. What he really wants is power, the strength of it and the exercise of it. But he also knows that he will never get it. No one ever thinks of him as anything but an assistant-to.

His case illustrates what many assistants are afraid of.

CASE 11. *Assistant-to positions used as a dumping ground for organization problem children.*

A large company had been known for many years as a one-man organization. The chief executive decided all major and many minor problems.

His successor was determined to decentralize and delegate, but he was blocked by many of the executives who had rendered long service to the company. They had been deprived of any real decision-making power and now were unable

to take responsibility and authority. Whatever power they got they did not use; they merely continued to "pass the buck."

The new chief executive got rid of some of these executives by installing a pension plan with a compulsory retirement age of sixty-five. He was able to transfer others to positions they were able to fill satisfactorily. He created new positions—such as "manager of annual reports preparation" and "supervisor of suggestion systems"—for still others. He accomplished some improvement by personal example, by training, by refusing to make decisions for others. He moved his headquarters physically away from the plant operations so that his men would not be constantly in communication with him.

But there were still a considerable number of incapable executives in positions that had now been assigned important decision-making powers, men with twenty-five to thirty years' experience who were still fifteen or twenty years away from retirement.

The chief executive finally used the device of filling these positions with new executives hired from other companies or promoted from within and made some of the incumbents assistants to higher management. In other instances he gave the incumbents younger and more capable assistants. In the former case, the position of assistant became more or less a "hospital for diseased cats," where the long-time executive had title and income but no real function, except perhaps that of delay, frustration, and interference. In the latter case, young, aggressive assistants battled their superiors until they got rid of them, either by making them ridiculous in some way or by seeing that they were shifted to other offices with carpet, secretary, desk, and nothing to do. The extra administrative expense resulting from this multiplicity of assistants became so heavy, and their drag on the conduct of the business so serious, that the chief executive finally found it less expensive to retire

the incompetent executives at full pension—before their retirement age—than to keep them.

CASE 12. *Having an “assistant-to” becomes a status symbol.*

In one company, having an assistant-to became such a recognized symbol of status that most of the assistants acquired assistants of their own. All were eliminated by fiat, and administrative expense was sharply reduced in consequence. Moreover, sales and profits expanded more than those of major competitors in the next year or two.

Admittedly, the linkage between cause and effect is, in case 12, not clearly established. Furthermore, functions do not necessarily change when titles are abolished. Nevertheless, there is considerable evidence to show that where the possession of an assistant has become a major status symbol, the cost of the staff help is likely to outweigh the benefits.

Here is a more extreme example, drawn from public administration, in which a “coordinating” staff group managed to grow out of all proportion to its work.

AN EXAMPLE OF THE MISAPPLICATION OF
GENERAL STAFF

(Office of the Special Representative in Europe)

(The following information is largely an abridgement of *Foreign Aid Program in Europe, Report of the Investigations Division of the Committee on Appropriations, United States Senate, Relative to Activities of the Foreign Aid Program in France and in the Regional Offices MSA in Paris, July, 1953, pp. 28-53.*)

The Office of the Special Representative in Europe of MSA is the successor to the Office of the Special Representative of ECA. The responsibilities of the special representative are to *coordinate* all activities under Title I of the Mutual Security Act and to serve as the permanent representative on NATO as well as the point of

contact with OEEC. The present purpose of the Office, therefore, is to integrate the programs of the various missions and to relate the over-all European objectives to each individual program for each individual country.

When the Office was first created the theory was that this coordinating task would be performed by a top-level policy officer with a small staff of 30 or 40 highly qualified specialists who would concern themselves with questions of policy and would not intervene in the detailed operations of the missions.

As of March 31, 1953, the Office of the Special Representative in Europe had in its employ 630 Americans and 825 locals, or a total of 1,455 people on the payroll. Salaries of this staff including both dollars and counterpart were \$2,848,000 for fiscal year 1952. The total salary cost for all missions and SRE for fiscal year 1952 was \$6,167,000, which means that 45 per cent of the entire European salary cost was incurred in the SRE operation. This does not include SRE overtime of \$152,489, living allowances of \$226,953, and quarters allowances of \$782,000, which bring the total personal services cost of SRE to \$5,741,000. This is 47½ per cent of the total personal service payments for all of Europe, which amounted to \$12,117,556.

The total administrative cost of MSA for all Europe for the fiscal year 1952 was \$21,980,060, of which the SRE costs amounted to \$10,511,000. *This means that approximately 50 per cent of the entire cost of MSA Administration in Europe was incurred by SRE acting merely as a coordinating office.*

The statement of administrative costs of SRE in dollars and counterpart for the first 8 months of fiscal year 1953 indicates that the expenses are running at substantially the same level as in fiscal year 1952.

Some of the significant items of SRE expense included in the attached schedule are \$1,068,000 for travel and \$324,000 for rent, which does not include alterations amounting to \$232,000. The equipment cost for 1952 was \$349,000, although SRE had been in business four years and presumably its offices had been amply equipped prior to fiscal year 1952. Supplies and materials

amounted to \$399,000. Lands and structures accounted for an expenditure of \$1,427,143.

The Far East program involving an equally critical area is now handled without a special agency to coordinate and acts as a screening unit. The Far East is much further removed from Washington than any of the European missions. Telephone and telegraph communications are much less effective and yet the Far East, up to now, has been administered without the equivalent of SRE. [*Italics supplied.*]

11

The Practical Use of General Staff Positions in Business

In contrast to the cases cited in the last chapter, there are many instances in which assistants have been extremely valuable. In these cases, the functions of the position have been carefully thought out in advance instead of being left to grow spontaneously.

Du Pont, which was one of the first companies to set up special staff groups, was also among the first to use general staff assistants. As early as 1908, Coleman du Pont had employed John Lee Pratt on some general staff assignments, and in 1912, H. M. Barksdale, then the general manager of the company, set up what may be considered one of the first genuine general staff positions by appointing Donaldson Brown "to attend to analytical work" arising in any of the departments or at management committee meetings. It was in this capacity that Brown developed the famous formula $R = T \times P$ (return on capital invested equals turnover of invested capital multiplied by the percentage of profits on sales).

When the company's president, Coleman du Pont, called for a study and report on the performance of the various operating departments, the general staff group presented these statistical data in the company "chartroom" for discussion by the operating departments and development of recommendations. Similarly, the group prepared forecasts of profits, capital requirements, production schedules, and purchases to assist the chiefs of the various operating departments and to aid in the formulation of policies for coordinated control. Later an economist was employed to forecast over-all trends for the country as a whole in relation to the sale of the company's products, and, still later, general staffs were appointed to make an inventory of personnel (1918) and to propose a new organization structure (1919). This general staff work in no way interfered with the appropriate decentralization of management responsibilities. The general staff had no administrative authority whatsoever.

Independently of Du Pont, Charles W. Nash, president of General Motors, had set up staffs to help him on specific production problems, such as workloads, methods, and quality control. His successor, W. C. Durant, used assistants-to, among whom were Charles Zimmerschied and John Lee Pratt. And in the great GM reorganization of 1920-1921, a number of different staffs were set up, as proposed in an Organization Memorandum of Spring, 1920. The following descriptions are taken from the sections of the memorandum covering the Finance and Accounting Staff, the General Advisory Staff, and the President's Personal Staff:

General Advisory Staff

The purpose of this staff is to advise the chief executive of the Operation Staff concerning problems of technical and commercial nature which are themselves so broad and require so much study as to be outside the scope of a single operation and which will be, when developed, of importance in the guidance of all operations.

... The Control of the General Advisory Staff is under a chief executive who is a Vice President of the Corporation. He is supported by such assistants as he may designate who, together with the Staff Secretary, constitute the executive side of the General Advisory Staff.

President's Personal Staff

In view of the large number of matters that must necessarily come directly under the supervision of the president of the corporation, through the interchange of matters from the different staffs, it becomes absolutely essential that an organization be provided to *relieve the president of detail matters so far as it is possible to do so.*

The president's personal staff is divided into two general divisions:

1. Personal assistants to the president.
2. Appropriations Committee.

Personal assistants to the president. One or more assistants will be designated by the president for such duties as the president may elect to attach to such an appointment.

Appropriations Committee. This committee is to investigate, on behalf of the president, as to the propriety of extensions to the corporation's units represented by betterments to existing properties or additions through acquisitions of new properties as may be recommended by the executive in charge of any operating divisions or group of operations or by the vice president in charge of the general advisory staff. The appropriations committee has the privilege of drawing on the general advisory staff for such technical information and assistance as in its judgment may be desirable with a view to obtaining the benefit of all the resources and expert information within the corporation organization as a whole, in order that the president may best determine the proper method of procedure in each individual case. [Italics supplied.]

There are many examples of assistants to presidents who have ultimately become presidents themselves:

T. S. Peterson, assistant to the president of Standard Oil

Company of California, and later president of the same company

William Farrell, assistant to E. H. Gary, and later president of U. S. Steel

C. F. Drake, assistant to Andrew Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury, and later president of Gulf Oil Corporation

Sidney Swensrud, assistant to the president, Standard Oil Company, Ohio, and later president of Gulf Oil Corporation

L. F. McCollum, coordinator of production (a general staff position), Standard Oil of New Jersey, later president of Continental Oil Company

M. W. Cresap, Jr., vice president of Westinghouse Electric Corporation and assistant to its president, later executive vice president and president

Ralph J. Cordiner, assistant to the president, General Electric Company, and later president of the same company

F. N. Schwartz, assistant to the president, Bristol-Myers Company, later president of the same company

Carter L. Burgess, assistant to the president of TWA and later its president

Francis O. Case, assistant to the president, Anaconda Copper Company, later president of Glen Alden

Ernest S. Marsh, assistant to the president and later president of the Santa Fe Railway

There are also many examples of assistants to presidents who have risen to other important positions in their companies.

At the American Machine and Foundry Company, four of the six top men started as assistants to the president. (One had been an admiral's aide, a second an Army colonel, and a third had directed Marshall plan operations.) General Walter B. Smith, formerly Eisenhower's chief of staff, was an AMF "chief of staff" and also ran the company during its president's absence.

At Du Pont, John J. Raskob was for many years assistant

to Pierre S. du Pont, when the latter was actively directing the company. He studied the various alternative uses of Du Pont's profits and in 1917 wrote a famous memorandum, which perhaps made up for all the errors other assistants have been guilty of:

The United States holds greater possibilities for development in the immediate future than any country in the world. . . . An attractive investment is afforded in what I consider the most promising industry in the United States. . . . The General Motors Company with proper management will show results in the future second to none in any American industry.

Against strong opposition, Raskob persuaded the du Ponts to put \$25 million into General Motors and a year later another \$24 million. These equities subsequently grew to \$2 billion.

At General Motors, Alfred P. Sloan, Jr., and later C. E. Wilson and Harlow Curtice acted as chiefs of staff (vice presidents or executive vice presidents in charge of staff) before becoming presidents.

Other companies also have had vice presidents (often senior or executive vice presidents) coordinating some or all the staff activities for the president—e.g., American Cyanamid Company, Union Carbide Corporation, Continental Oil Company, Sinclair Oil Company, and American Telephone and Telegraph Company. Still other organizations have administrative vice presidents to handle all the coordinating work for the presidents. A great many companies, too numerous to mention, use the assistant-to at different levels of management.

Frederick W. Taylor, "The Father of Scientific Management," also employed assistants. Several of his most famous associates—for example, Henry Laurence Gantt and M. L. Cooke—began their association with him in this way.

We should hasten to add, however, that there are many com-

panies that are utterly opposed to the use of assistants-to. The best-known example is General Electric, whose president, Ralph J. Cordiner, has written ¹ that his company:

... has no place for "assistants," "assistants to," or "administrative assistants." ... If a position is too big for one person and appears to require assistants, then the work should be divided up and reorganized into as many positions as are required to do the work efficiently. Each position in the company should be able to stand on its own with a specifically defined area of responsibility, authority, and accountability.

Prerequisites for Success

It is obviously difficult to generalize about successful practice, for much depends on the specific situation—whether the company is a single- or multiplant operation, whether the problems are repetitive or shifting and, if the latter, on the nature of the shifts—and above all on the personalities of the chief and his assistant. Nevertheless there appears to be a group of "do's" that apply in practically all cases. A tentative checklist of them appears below:

1. The executive's own job should be analyzed in terms of his major leadership responsibilities: representation, initiation, interpretation, administration, communication, and so on, and the workload each imposes. This will indicate the functions the assistant can perform.

2. If the chief wishes the assistant to perform any duties not strictly of a general staff nature—provide specialized staff or personal staff services or handle line responsibilities—this should be made clear in the assistant's job description. The responsibilities should be listed and their nature made plain.

3. The assistant's relationship to his chief's subordinates and superior and to other executives with whom he may have frequent contact should be defined. And it is essential to specify which "hat" the executive is wearing on what occasion.

4. The assistant-to should be carefully selected. In addition to a good basic education, he should have adequate experience in line jobs and in special staff work. The position should not be made a dumping ground for problem children.

5. The assistant should understand his functions before his appointment and receive some special training.

6. If possible, the chief should set definite times (days and hours) at which he will see his assistant, not only to ensure the latter access to him, but to make it more likely that he himself will make adequate use of the staff aid.

7. The executive should utilize the time he saves by having an assistant-to keep in closer touch with his immediate line subordinates.

8. When he is going to be absent, the chief should nominate a senior officer to "answer for him," so that the assistant will neither have to assume authority nor let things slide.

9. While assistant-to positions may be used as a training device or part of an executive development program, they should not be created for this purpose alone. In fact, they are useful for training only if the assistants are really needed. Only in that way can the assistant learn to see the over-all problems, work under pressure, handle people in delicate situations, and profit by his mistakes.

10. Each incumbent of an assistant-to position should be limited to a few years of tenure and plans for his future employment in some other capacity should be made in advance.

Some of these points are discussed below.

Analysis of the Executive's Own Job. A major oil company, which employs some twenty-eight thousand persons, has a number of senior executives participating in policy formulation through various committees. It has, however, given considerable thought to the position of assistant to the president. The top organization chart is shown in Figure 13, and the work

description sheet is analyzed in Appendix E against the functions of leadership shown in Figure 3 in Chapter 3.

It is interesting to note how large a proportion of the president's responsibility for the routine of control (in the strictly

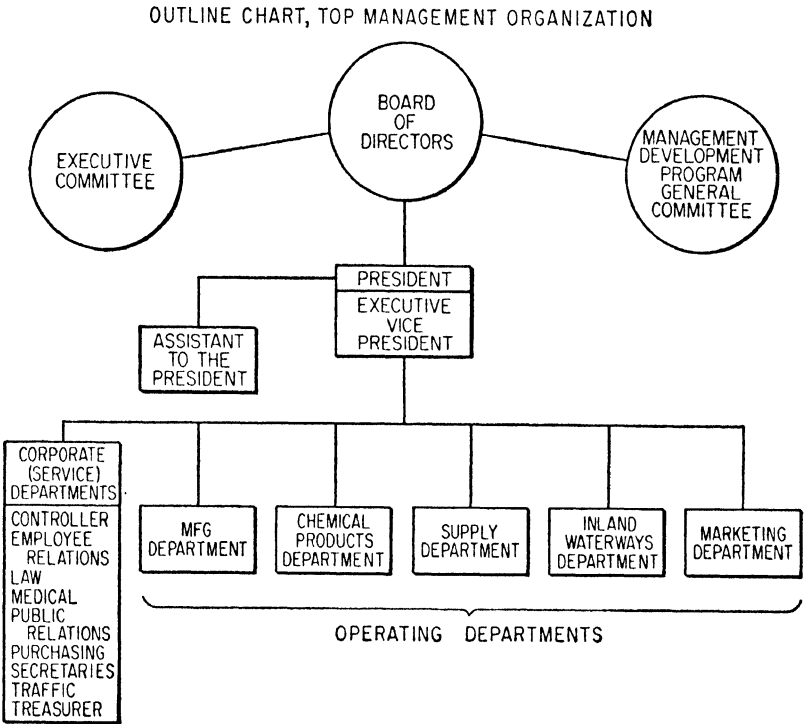


Figure 13

organizational and technical sense of the term) is lightened by his assistant-to. In this particular instance the incumbent had previous experience while the president had not. This illustrates two further advantages of careful selection of trained personnel for the assistant-to position and of arranging matters so that the incumbent is able to function as a true general staff officer:

1. The executive is able to apply Frederick Taylor's well-known "exception principle" to all control material.

2. Without in any way detracting from his own authority, the executive can supplement his own experience where it is "light" by making use of general staff assistants with special qualifications.

Clear Separation of Mixed Responsibilities. Appendix F presents a digest of the job description of a young man in the insurance business who simultaneously wears the following "hats":

1. Secretary of the corporation. His secretarial function includes general plus personal staff functions

2. Secretary of an industry trade association

3. Assistant to the president (general staff office)

4. Assistant to the executive vice president (general staff office)

5. Supervision of two operating departments and partial supervision of another (line functions)

Initially, the young man, Singleton, was in charge of a line department. Then the secretary of the company became involved in some foreign legal problems and asked Singleton to help him out. Later these problems were taken over by the executive vice president of the company, and Singleton became his assistant—to tackle one problem after another, systematize the solution, and push the problem into a line department. In this way he set up departments to handle problems of law, foreign exchange, control, organization, systems and procedures, mechanical bookkeeping, among others.

After this, the president of the company, a foremost technician in the insurance field, found that he needed someone to handle the tremendous amount of documents and mail coming to his desk. So every morning, Singleton goes through the mail, passing as much of it as possible to vice presidents of the organization. Around a quarter of ten, Singleton goes to

the president's office and spends anywhere from a half hour to an hour with him.

The president spends the rest of the morning in committee meetings with the numerous subsidiary company executives. In the meantime, Singleton acts on the president's decisions, farms out as much of the work as possible, and completes the rest himself for the president's approval.

Singleton also takes charge of out-of-town visitors, arranging trips to the principal points of interest in the vicinity and other entertainment for them. Whenever he has time, he lunches with an executive from some other department and in this way learns a great deal informally. He usually devotes the afternoon to his work as secretary of the company and to following up special reports to be prepared for the president.

The president spends most of his time away from the office, visiting the various branches of the company, but either he or the executive vice president is always at the office, and Singleton checks almost all nonroutine decisions with one or the other of these two men.

In any case, very important decisions have to be checked with the chairman of the board, who built up the company and is completely familiar with its operations. Thus, in his capacity as assistant, Singleton is really three rungs down the ladder from the top and is essentially a very superior handyman for the higher executives.

Defining Relationships. In order to provide more room for its expanding business, the Smallwood Manufacturing Company established a separate plant for its electronics division in 1951. R. S. Hudson, vice president in charge of electronics at the main plant, became the division head.

After the relocation and "working in" of the new facilities, Hudson found that his research and development work was hampered by a growing burden of routine and detail. At first he thought he could eliminate some of the backlog by hiring

another secretary, but most of the deferred items had already been set aside by the regular secretary as beyond her ability to handle. The crisis came when the company received a summons to appear in court because of a violation it had overlooked.

Remembering his college courses, Hudson decided to hire an assistant-to. He interviewed a group of outside applicants, but found their understanding of the business too abstract or general. So he turned his attention to the resources within the plant, and his choice fell upon Bob Walker, an enterprising worker in the methods department, who had been with the company for seven years and was well liked by both production and staff men. Walker was a conscientious worker who possessed considerable drive and the enviable ability to separate facts from emotional observations. Hudson drew up a detailed description of the job, including a definite statement of the assistant's relationships with other executives, and made sure that all his subordinates and others with whom the assistant would come in contact clearly understood the assistant's position.

Essentially the assistant's job was to gather information for his chief and to help him disseminate information within the company. The job description made this clear, and also the fact that he had no personal authority over his chief's immediate-subordinates. Reassured in this way, the executives were ready to cooperate with him. Walker's manner of operating also encouraged confidence. Among his activities were the following:

Weekly Meetings. One of Walker's duties was collating the work backlog, putting the items in some semblance of importance and urgency. Within three days, the most pressing had been taken care of, and then Walker checked with Hudson on the procedure to follow in handling the rest of the work.

A defect in managerial follow-through of suggestions made at the weekly foremen's meetings was glaringly apparent.

No minutes were taken because Hudson wanted an atmosphere of free discussion with no holds barred. While this was advantageous in many ways, it made it difficult to remember all the details that demanded attention.

So Walker was invited to sit in and get "the feel" of what went on in the plant, and to make a note of important items that were "put off," "taken under advisement," or referred to some department for a report or action.

In time he developed a system of meeting follow-through that helped to cut down rambling and "buck passing" at the meetings and also the length of the sessions. On the day before each meeting, he gave Hudson a list of the important items brought up at the previous meeting, showing the recommendations made on each and the disposition, if any, of the matter, plus a list of new items that might be important enough to be taken up at the meeting. This list served as both a reminder and a guide to Hudson.

Reading Matter and Technical Data. It had long been Hudson's habit to file catalogues, sales letters, and trade publications in the wastebasket or, if the covers were inviting, perhaps keep them on his desk for a week or so. He now turned this voluminous material over to Walker, who selected the items that might have some application to the company. The reading took him less than an hour a day but made it possible for him to give Hudson valuable and timely briefing on the latest developments in the industry and to point out items that might be worth looking into more deeply. Following is some of the important information Hudson received:

1. Contract awards given to competitors (from press releases and business surveys)
2. Newest improvements in machines and processes (from technical and professional magazines)
3. Trend of competitors' earnings (annual reports, financial news items)
4. Résumés of important speeches or trade reports having

a bearing on the company's business (from newspapers and magazines)

5. Current events and political developments in surrounding plant communities (from local and city newspapers)

Public Relations. Hudson had rarely attended community events, engineering and trade meetings, or scientific exhibitions. He was always too busy, too "tied up," and often too tired to go. Walker's help gave him more time for these events, and when it was not possible for him to go himself, he sent Walker in his stead. The result was further assistance in keeping abreast of developments in the industry and the community. More than that, the company gained a reputation for interest in industry and community activities.

Idea Research. Hudson was a fast thinker and an idea man. At weekly meetings or while talking in his office he would sometimes outline a new method or suggest a change in an old one. Since Walker had had valuable experience in the methods department, he could usually offer a fair estimate of what an idea meant in terms of labor and material costs. However, the matter rarely ended there. Walker would chase after the idea and, after doing a bit of research on it, give Hudson a list of the pros and cons that had come to light. In obtaining information, he would use the following procedure:

1. Refer to textbooks, trade manuals, and scientific journals. (Had the idea been used before? Had something like it been tried? What were the results?)

2. Visit competitive installations if possible.

3. Get advice and comments from the purchasing agent, the plant engineer, vendor salesmen, and the cost department.

Not all ideas were given this exploratory treatment. Walker did not hesitate to nip in the bud those that were unrealistic. If an idea did not make sense to start with, Walker frankly told Hudson so.

The Grapevine. Walker was neither a tattletale nor a gossip,

and since those in the plant had known him as one of their own for seven years, they had confidence in his integrity and impartiality and held back nothing from him in the way of information. Amazingly, this rapport included the union officers, and as a result of the unclogged line of communication Hudson was quickly apprised when sentiment in the plant changed.

Walker realized the dangers inherent in gathering information of this sort, and always reported on conditions, never on personalities. Hudson would sometimes demand to know "who" as well as "what," but Walker stood his ground and never betrayed a confidence.

During contract negotiation time, it is true, Walker was hard put to maintain neutrality. After a bit of practice he was able to ward off the pressure by a stock reply to all questions: "That's something you'll have to arbitrate."

Routine Jobs. Walker also maintained close liaison with the day-to-day activities of his chief. He took a lively interest in the various projects and production schedules of the shop. Often Hudson would leave hastily scribbled instructions on Walker's desk, and the assistant would then work out the details, and perhaps initiate the work. He also maintained a calendar which, in effect, was a running inventory of special meetings, conferences, plant inspections, and various other activities, and notified all interested persons, well in advance, of the parts they were to play. In some instances, he arranged the meetings, drew up the agenda, and issued the notices.

Careful Selection of the Assistant-to. The assistant to a higher executive in business needs anywhere from five to fifteen years' business experience, and good knowledge of the technology of his company, preferably exposure to it in both line and staff jobs. He needs also a knowledge of the people in the company and the ability to win their respect, but the type of personality necessary will depend to some extent on the personality of his

boss. (Some interesting novels have been written on the subject—for example, Sloan Wilson's *The Man in the Grey Flannel Suit*, Herbert C. Lyons' *Front Office*, and Bernard Malamud's *The Assistant*.)

The executive who wishes to hire an assistant needs to ask himself honestly whether he wants to hire someone like himself or a man who complements him. Does he want someone who likes to be dominated? ("Does the 'infantile' personality tend to move from one assistant-to job to another?" asked Thomas L. Whisler in an article in the *Journal of Business*, University of Chicago.²) Or would he prefer the "mature" executive who stays in an assistant-to position for only a short while because he does not wish to be wholly dependent on one man and a possibly vague assignment?

Special Training. Staff work, like any specialized activity, requires time for perfection. Hence consideration should be given to a training and induction program for the man starting on this difficult assignment on which so many have failed. In the first place this should cover the nature of staff and the different types of staff, their responsibilities and authority—and these latter tend to vary in different types of staff activity. There should be a discussion of the do's and don'ts of staff work. Next the areas in which staff may initiate action and the relationships of staff to other groups need to be carefully spelled out. The assistant-to must be given time to familiarize himself with the problems on which he can be most useful and the best way of approaching and solving them. And there must be allowance for errors. Finally, once the formal relationships have been established, the actual relations should be informal—face-to-face or over the telephone rather than by paperwork.

Time with the Chief. Properly to utilize the assistant-to and give him an opportunity of being really useful, the chief should have regular appointments with him. Haphazard re-

relationships are great destroyers of system, and without some systematic approach the assistant-to function may easily be crushed by its opponents or die of neglect.

And the systematic approach includes a regular evaluation of results accomplished. Self-appraisal, if made on an honest and professional basis, may be helpful. And the first criterion of success for the assistant is usefulness—how much and what use is made of his services in comparison to alternatives within and without the company? And, of course, usefulness could be further analyzed in terms of timeliness and helpfulness—time saved for the superior, amount of self-education, and contributions to the company's objectives (rather than to the individual's own advancement).

Utilizing Time Saved by an Assistant-to. The assistant-to in the Kale Company is in an unusual position. The job varies greatly according to the man who has the title and the persons with whom he works.

The president of this company has twelve people reporting to him, five of them regional managers and five vice presidents (in charge of sales, transportation, production, railroad sales, and finance). Twenty-five people have access to the president, but with two assistants he is able to spend adequate time with each of them.

The Assistant-to as a Training Device. Young Thornton had been a student of economics at one of the older universities and had spent summers working on the production lines of large companies in the automobile, rubber, and chocolate industries. But because of the difficulties of rising quickly, he sought a permanent job in a smaller firm, The M & I Company. He obtained an introduction to the president, James Maxwell, who asked him to spend one summer in the company studying the cost system. Thornton gladly accepted, made an analysis of the shortcomings of the accounting system, and suggested improvements. The president was im-

pressed so favorably that he offered Thornton a position as his assistant.

President Maxwell had been an early follower of the scientific management movement. He had seen his father fail in business largely because of faith in wrong "hunches" and lack of proper accounting control. He became a disciple of Harrington Emerson, and *The Twelve Principles of Efficiency*³ became his bible. His system of cost accounting, for example, employed the "marginal" approach, and at the end of each day the margin contributed by each department and branch was reported to him. He insisted on a factual approach to business problems whenever possible and often checked the accuracy of the data reported to him.

Thornton started his work as assistant by setting up a systematic accounting policy, concentrating on pricing and costing. He presented the major alternative policies—the advantages and disadvantages of each and its practical implications—to his chief. From accounting Thornton passed on to manufacturing and marketing policies, and codified them as well.

Thornton's method of working out policies was a thorough one. When a problem was assigned to him, he would first develop a plan of action, drawing on his own knowledge, reading about the problem as widely as possible, thinking out its implications, and preparing the relevant questions. Then he would discuss his proposed investigation with his chief and have him approve the plan.

Next Thornton interviewed the executives concerned with the problem, taking very careful notes on each interview and working out the practical implications of the suggestions. Results of all these different contacts were put together in a memorandum which analyzed the problem and recommended action. This memorandum was reviewed by his chief, subjected to many questions, comments, and criticisms, and then done over as many times as the chief required.

When the chief was finally satisfied, the memorandum was submitted to the top management committee for comment and again redone as many times as necessary. When the basic policy changes were finally approved by every principal concerned, they were drafted for adoption and execution by the assistant.

In this way three major policy books were completed in less than eighteen months. By the end of that time, Thornton had received an intensive education in major aspects of the business, its personalities and their relationships to one another.

The president was a hard taskmaster, doing much of his planning at night and insisting thereafter on a first-rate game of bridge (after that the assistant never played bridge again if he could avoid it), insisting on exactness, thoroughness, and clarity in recommendations.

Thus the assistant learned how to integrate varying opinions (sometimes violently opposed opinions) and organize his own ideas.

Thornton served as assistant-to for two and a half years—the limit fixed by the president before his appointment. (As with university assistant professors, it was to be a case of “up or out.”) Then he moved up into a minor supervisory job, but he was confident that the road ahead to top management posts would open if he continued to reach the objectives before him and outdo his competitors.

After a definite period of time, such an assistant-to may well prefer a more heavily “job-related” position to one that may appear to him to be heavily “person-related.”

Specific Contributions of the General Staff

If the do's are properly attended to, the general staff in business can play a helpful role in relieving the chief of some part of the management functions that cannot be delegated. But it can do so only if the leadership functions are effectively maintained and continuously carried out by the

chief. The chief must continue to lead; to initiate plans and stimulate his subordinates; to interpret ideas, plans, and policies to them, acting as teacher and counselor; to represent the organization as a symbol or image; and to keep in touch with, and have the proper "feel" of, the grass roots. Only when the chief leads in this sense can the general staff function effectively. Here, then, are some of the principal contributions a general staff officer can make:

Handling Part of the Managerial Functions. The assistant-to can make contributions to the carrying out of the strictly managerial functions (forecasting, planning, organizing, controlling, and perhaps even personnel and public relations) which the chief cannot delegate to any of his line subordinates because the responsibilities may be inherent in his office.

The power and prestige of his office (especially if he is a chief executive), the general nature of his work and its coordinating power, the overview and long-range view required of him may all necessitate keeping these functions in his office. But the chief may not have the time or the ability to deal successfully with all phases of these functions. Hence many parts of them may devolve on his general staff.

Now clearly the initiation of major work, its over-all direction and supervision, and review of results are largely the responsibility of the chief. However, the anticipation of problems likely to be important, the working out of a plan of study, gathering of the necessary information, points of view, and suggestions, developing the technical aspects, doing much of the basic thinking, consulting and informing all concerned, pulling together different points of view, attending to the necessary paperwork, reporting on progress after adoption—these are some of the jobs that can be handled by the assistant-to. And it is often recommended that he use the method of completed staff work (see Appendix D).

The following are ways in which assistants-to actually help their chiefs with several phases of management.

Organization. Here the assistant-to can handle a good deal of time-consuming work for his chief. He can:

1. Develop and recommend organizational standards, principles, and relationships for application throughout the company

2. Prepare organizational studies of company activities when required, including recommendations on management and administrative problems and on the assignment of general functions and responsibilities

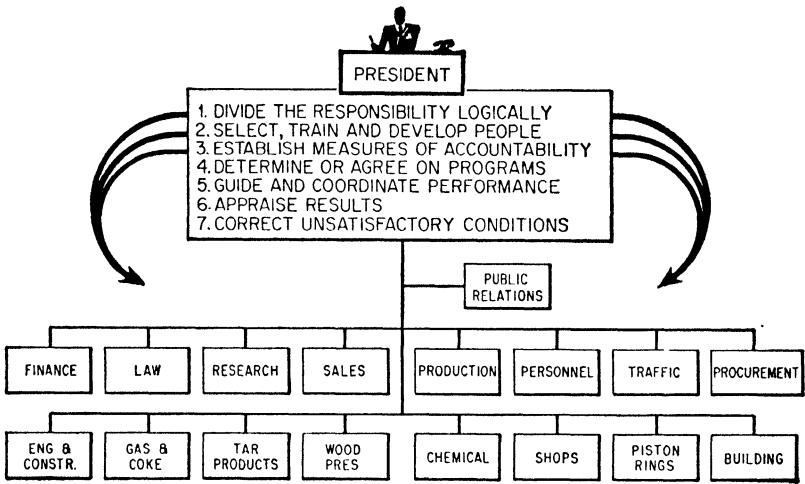
3. Review proposed organizational plans or changes and give advice on them, and assist in resolving any organizational differences

4. Prepare and publish the organizational manual, review and advise on divisional organization manuals, and coordinate the release of information on company organization

(See Appendix G for a report of how the staff at Koppers Company has functioned in this and other respects.)

Control. He may prepare statistical information, reports, charts, and related written comments for use by officers, directors, and others of the home office. He can suggest improvements in statistical presentations, recommend and make special studies and analyses for better control. He can also study the operating results of other companies in the same or allied fields and compare them with results achieved in his own company.

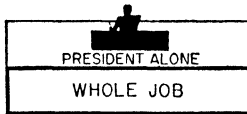
Long-range Planning. The help of the assistant-to may be particularly valuable in the solution of long-range problems. These tend to be with us continuously, and therefore we may continuously postpone attempting solutions. Such problems may involve fundamental questions about the kind of business the company is to pursue, the long-range needs and market responses to the product, the great secular trends affecting the business, such as population shifts and changes in the composition of the population, changes in tastes and technology, in styles of living, in the framework of law, etc. And there may be



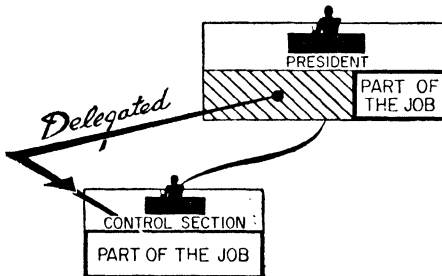
THE FIRST THREE ARE ESSENTIALLY ACCOMPLISHED IN THE ESTABLISHMENT OF ORGANIZATION AND MANNING ITS STRUCTURE

1. A president's job, says Gen. Brehon B. Somervell, is really seven. It's...

THE EXTENT OF THE REMAINING FOUR ARE BEYOND PERFORMANCE BY ONE MAN POWER



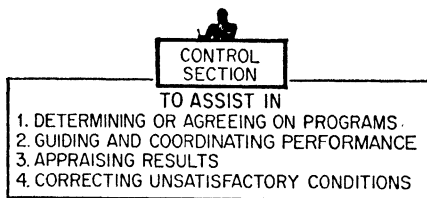
SO HE PROVIDES HIMSELF WITH MORE EYES, MORE EARS AND MORE HOURS PER DAY TO ASSIST HIM



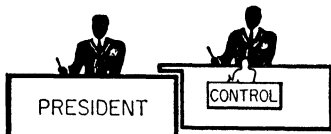
2. Too much for one man. So Somervell has set up at Koppers Co.

a...

THE DUTIES OF THE CONTROL SECTION ARE THEREFORE:



IN PERFORMING THESE DUTIES IT IS ACTING FOR THE PRESIDENT

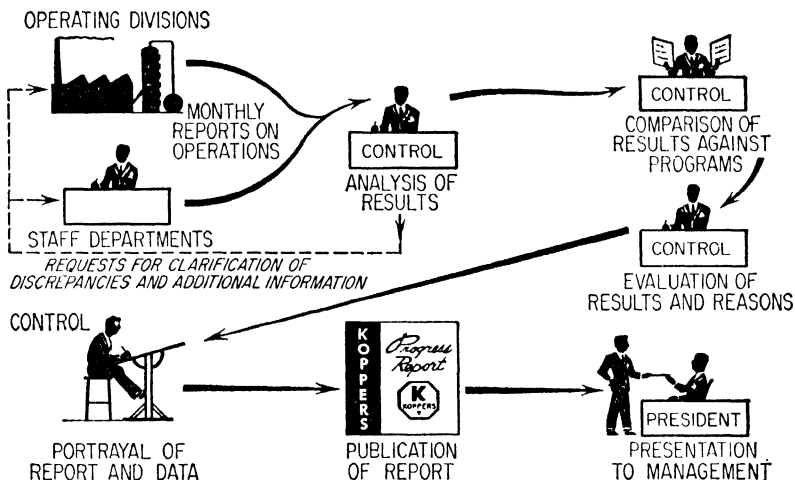


IT IS DOING THE THINGS HE WOULD DO WERE IT NOT PHYSICALLY IMPOSSIBLE

FURTHER, IF PROPERLY SUPERVISED AND TRAINED, IT IS DOING THEM THE WAY HE WOULD DO THEM.

3. Control section to be his eyes and ears. Its biggest job: to prepare a ...

APPRAISING RESULTS THROUGH PROGRESS REPORTS



4. Monthly progress report, summarizing all key information for management.

more specific long-term trends of an industry or company character—in basic scientific research, manpower requirements, and so on—that may have a vital effect on survival and growth.

A general staff executive in the chief's office may be well qualified to tackle *some aspects* of the long-term problems. Quite possibly he may be fitted by education and experience to turn out timely and useful reports on them. And because of his position as a representative of his chief, and perhaps also because he brings to his job the authority of knowledge, he can gain the respect that will enable him to obtain any assistance necessary from inside the company or outside it.

The precise organization, concepts, and techniques of long-range planning cannot concern us in this book. But it should be noted that the complete separation of planning from operations might be an error. For long-range planning must be rooted in what has been and what is. It requires the participation of operating executives, for much of it must be based on their experience and they must participate if they are to accept the plans wholeheartedly. Moreover, participation is an educational experience for them, and they in turn can educate the planner.

Coordination. While a leader can delegate the details of coordination, he cannot delegate responsibility for this function. And the more he multiplies specialists—in organization, in control, in public and industrial relations, in management development, and so on—the more he adds to his burden of coordination. For the principal specialist in any function must ultimately bring his problems of coordination back to his chief. He is, by definition, the most skilled and experienced person in that function in the company. But he lacks the authority to compel coordination in areas responsible to his equals. If there is a serious difference of opinion, the issue is bound to come back to the chief. However much we may wish to

govern with the consent of the governed, situations do arise in which someone must arbitrate.

There has been a tremendous increase in specialization in business organization over the last twenty years. In consequence, many high executives have excessive spans of control and do not see how they can reduce them. If they appoint additional line or specialist subordinates, they still have to communicate with them and coordinate their efforts, in addition to discharging the residue of major responsibilities that no chief can delegate.

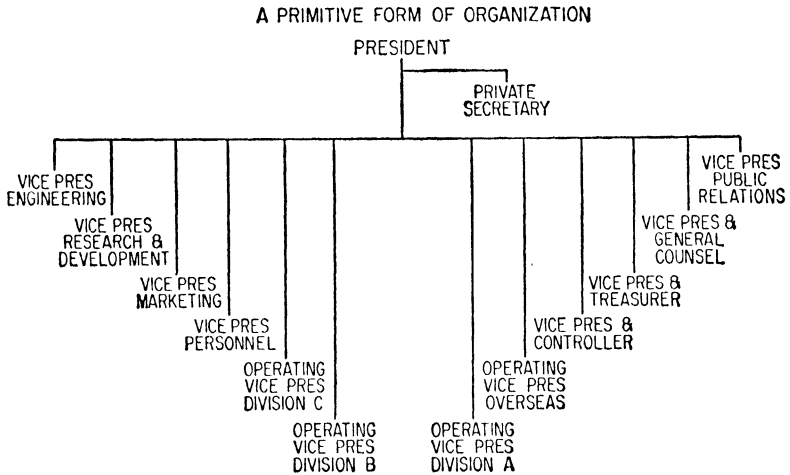
So far many chief executives have attempted to deal with this problem by trusting to their subordinates' powers of self-coordination. But this is, at best, only a partial solution. The proliferation of committees is one sign that it is not wholly satisfactory. And despite (sometimes because of) committees, many high executives are excessively desk-bound. So-called "administrative distance" is created, not by levels on an organization chart, but by the fact that the chief has no time to maintain easy personal contacts with his immediate subordinates. His contacts with them tend to become increasingly official and to be conducted under pressure.

The main reason for this is that self-coordination creates insoluble problems of communication. It ignores the clearing-house principle discussed earlier. In Figure 14 the president has twelve people reporting to him—four operating vice presidents and eight vice presidents who head specialized functions. This produces the tangle of communications shown in Figure 4, page 71.

The executive, especially one high up in the management hierarchy, may find himself increasingly short of vital information. This is partly due to the length of the distance between his level and the grass roots (which means that information must filter upward through long channels), the number of people he has to see, and the consequent lack of time for

reading. Information reaching him can be distorted not only by errors in transmission but because the transmitters excise some of it through lack of judgment or in the desire to put their best feet forward.

An assistant-to can help to improve both the upward and the



1. No specific provision has been made for—
 - a. Publication and communication.
 - b. Continuous study of the economic position and relating the forward operating policy of the company to it.
 - c. Continuous reorganization.
 - d. Coordination: Obviously the president will not have time to coordinate the activities of 12 vice presidents himself and must leave them to do it for themselves, a difficult task in the absence of arrangements for studying the organization and communication.
2. No distinction has been drawn between the position of vice presidents with general responsibility for a subordinate area of operation and those with an ancillary responsibility (e.g., for marketing, personnel, development, etc.).
3. The president's span of control is far too wide. He has four operating vice presidents and eight more with special staff responsibilities dealing directly with himself. If he has many public relations duties, he is likely to be much overworked and to have little time for his major task as chief executive, which is to *lead* his team.

Figure 14

downward flow of communication by obtaining the opinions of subordinates at first hand and transmitting his chief's views to them. He can, in other words, serve as a clearinghouse for information and help to interpret the subordinates to their chief and the chief to his subordinates.

Direction. Direction of the enterprise as a whole is another task that the chief cannot delegate to anyone since it is the essence of his job. The assistant-to can, however, handle some of the details of it for him, suggest the possible courses of action, and report on the advantages and disadvantages of various policies.

Since the assistant is associated so closely with his chief, he may even know how the chief would decide under given circumstances, and so advise the chief's subordinates.

An even more important way in which the assistant can aid his chief in directing the enterprise is by acting as a challenger to the specialists.

One of the most serious problems a chief executive in particular encounters is deciding judiciously on the many proposals advanced by line and staff departments. Try as they may, they tend to take a partial, even a parochial, viewpoint that takes more account of departmental interest than of the needs of the company as a whole. And the chief himself may not be sufficiently expert to question the experts competently on all proposals, or he may be too busy to do the reading and thinking-through necessary. And he may find it very difficult to uncover the possible objections to proposals if the staff departments present a united front—on the basis of "I'll support you, if you support me."

If the assistant-to can do his homework for him in these cases, he can greatly improve the chief's score by bringing out the objections and counterarguments. If the chief executive accepts the proposals anyway, he will at least be deciding on the basis of all the facts.

As wartime prime minister, Sir Winston Churchill actually employed a brilliant economist to act as devil's advocate in this way. How he operated was described by the well-known economist, Sir Roy Harrod: ⁴

Sir Donald MacDougall was one of our foremost war winners, whose name is not widely known to the general public. All through the war he was working directly under Lord Cherwell and advising him on what advice he, in turn, should give to Mr. Winston Churchill on economic questions.

Mr. Churchill liked to have his own independent private staff, whose advice he could pit against what came to him from official sources. Our Civil Service is a most remarkable organism; it has a mysterious way of arriving at a view and then forming a common front. By what inscrutable processes it does this is something of a mystery to the outsider. . . . Such a united front is very powerful, even against Ministers, even against the Prime Minister. Happily this is usually a power for good, since the British civil servants probably form the most intelligent group of people in the world. But, of course, they may sometimes be wrong, and Mr. Churchill, aware of this, liked to go outside to his independent advisers who were not, so to speak, infected by the common view.

Sir Donald advised on the great economic problems of the war, such as how we should divide our manpower among various uses, and for what types of import we should use our available shipping resources. It is not always appreciated how intense and detailed was the interest Sir Winston took in economic questions during the war, and sometimes when briefed by Sir Donald he made his own view prevail against the common front and all the economic experts who supported it.

Sir Donald's great virtue was his eye for the quantitative importance of different things. In war people can get madly keen on some idea for economising resources, which may be ingenious, well worked out and convincing; yet the saving may be trivial. Another idea, less obvious, more awkward to apply, may save a hundred times as much. It was in rating things by their quantitative importance that the authority of Sir Donald was unmatched.

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¹ *New Frontiers for Professional Managers*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, New York, 1956, p. 70.

² Thomas L. Whisler, "The Assistant-to: The Man in Motley," *Journal of Business*, University of Chicago, October, 1956, pp. 274-279.

³ *The Engineering Magazine*, New York, 1912.

⁴ Sir Roy Harrod, "The Pound and the Dollar," *The Listener*, Sept. 26, 1957, p. 459.

Appendix A

Some Definitions and/or Descriptions of Staff in Typical Books on Management

1. George R. Terry, *Principles of Management*, Richard D. Irwin, Inc., Homewood, Ill., 1953, pp. 191–193.

Executives with line authority and responsibility see to it that the work is accomplished; but they receive assistance in the form of plans, advice, and suggestions from executives with staff responsibility and authority. In other words, a line officer is supported by a staff officer. Because of specialized training, experience and organization position, a staff officer is able to supply help in formulating plans and in detailing the action to be taken. The line officer has authority over personnel; he is the one who executes. The staff officer has the authority over ideas; he is the one who advises.

Staff functions can exist in a line and staff organization at any organization level, from the very top . . . to the very bottom.

It is also important to note that, although a function is of the staff type in its relation to the entire organization structure, it can, when viewed in and of itself, be of a line type organization. . . . This dual identification is sometimes confusing to the student of organization. To help clarify this difficulty, it is possible to identify the line part of a line and staff organization as those units which have authority and responsibility over actions directly related to accomplishing the major objectives of the enterprise, while the staff units have authority and responsibility over activities which

are indirectly related to accomplishing the major objectives, i.e., in achieving auxiliary objectives which aid in achieving the major objectives.

The real purpose of a staff man in a line and staff organization is not always clearly understood. The staff man's purpose is to advise, not to seek the advice of his superior on a problem. Approval or disapproval of a complete recommended solution should be the staff man's goal. Incomplete solutions, "Tell me what you want and I'll write it up," or passing the assignment on, in total, to another staff man are evidences of lack of true managerial ability. The reason for a staff man is to help, to recommend, and to undo mental tangles. To take the problem to the boss and bother him with it defeats the whole purpose of the staff arrangement; and such practice is certain to impede the progress, if not actually jeopardize the standing, of the staff member. The boss wants help, not harassment.

2. Morris E. Hurley, *Elements of Business Administration*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1953, pp. 346-347.

Line-and-staff organization refers to an organizational pattern in which individual specialists and groups of specialists advise line officers concerning aspects of their activities. The staff members concentrate their attention upon research and planning aspects of business problems. The line officials are thus freer to devote their attention to the execution phase of the policy, once it has been formulated. The authority and responsibility of staff members are advisory in nature and do not detract from the ultimate authority and responsibility of line officials.

Staff officials hold down jobs requiring much study and research. Functional officials specialize in one or a few of the many types of problems confronting the line officials. Both types of specialists play important roles in planning the activities to be carried on by the firm. It is the line officials, however, who retain full authority and responsibility for the execution of these plans once they become a firm part of company policy.

3. Ralph C. Davis, *The Fundamentals of Top Management*, Harper & Brothers, New York, 1951, pp. 796–797.

Staff organization structure is an evolution from a primary functional hierarchy. It is made necessary chiefly by increases in the load of managerial work and increasing requirements for specialized background, training, experience and ability. Hence it has to do with a division and specialization of managerial labor. It takes place necessarily above the level of operative performance. A staff organization, accordingly, assists the line and other staff organizations in the performance of some phases of an organic managerial function. It usually performs some facilitative services in addition. The nature, extent, and degree of staff performance are determined and limited by delegation.

The basic classification of staff functions must rest, therefore, on the classification of organic managerial functions. These functions are the creative planning, organizing, and controlling of the activities of organizational members in the accomplishment of a common objective. Technical staff functions assist the organization in planning. They may assist it by performing certain specialized functions that are purely facilitative. They may do both. They require a certain specialized background, training, and experience for their performance. They may or may not be professional, however. Coordinative staff functions assist the organization in control. They too may perform certain facilitative functions. Successful performance of staff control functions usually requires breadth of background, training, and experience, rather than intensity.

4. Dale Yoder, *Personnel Principles and Policies: Modern Manpower Management*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1952, pp. 21–22.

Staff functions . . . are essentially advisory and supplementary. The staff of an organization is removed from the line of action in order that it may counsel, advise, and assist the line. Staff functions have the responsibility for getting the facts upon which decisions on appropriate actions may be based. The staff should be ready to provide technically competent advice. It continually audits and

appraises line operations, thus determining the effectiveness of both policies and practices. The results of such appraisals, together with the best information obtainable from other organizations and from research, are then placed at the disposal of the line organization.

The major responsibilities of a staff division are five, including: (1) formulation of policy, (2) program planning, (3) constant review and appraisal (including the definition of criteria and controls), (4) consultation, (5) service to the operating line.

5. Paul E. Holden, Lounsbury S. Fish, and Hubert L. Smith, *Top Management Organization and Control*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1951, p. 36.

As the managerial process grows in complexity, the time, ability, and comprehension of single executives become increasingly inadequate and must be supplemented by staff agencies able to furnish specialized assistance and advice. An adequate staff organization, designed to take full advantage of specialized knowledge, concentrated attention, unified effort, and definite accountability for results within its appropriate fields, can go a long way toward relieving the burden and increasing the effectiveness of management. Such an organization may be relied upon (a) to determine needs and formulate appropriate plans, objectives, and controls; (b) to review, coordinate, digest, and pass expert opinion upon proposals; and (c) to keep executives informed of significant developments; and thus make it possible for management to concentrate its attention upon matters requiring its consideration.

Staff departments do not create new functions but concentrate specialized attention upon certain phases of the management problem as these reach extensive proportions. Before emerging as the specific activities of full-fledged staff agencies the same functions are found scattered among various individuals in different departments.

6. R. T. Livingston, *The Engineering of Organization and Management*, McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1949, p. 80.

A staff does not mean the creation of new functions but rather the collection of new services or other special functions under one head so that they can be more effectively performed. Staff represents no special interest, rather, the over-all interest.

The growth and appearance of staffs vary greatly with the kind of association. The staff, as the name implies, is something to lean upon. It gives the service of advice or counsel as distinguished from authority to perform. However, the staff has certain rights, especially that of performing its service. Staff is not for the top only. For its full utilization it should interpenetrate the whole organization. For its services to be effective, two things are essential: coordination and infiltration.

The advantage of such division is so great and so obvious that a great many kinds of staff functions are now to be found. Among the more important are: (1) controls; (2) service; (3) advisory, investigative and interpretive; (4) coordinative.

7. Paul Pigors and Charles A. Myers, *Personnel Administration: A Point of View and a Method*, 3d ed., McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., New York, 1956, pp. 16-17.

Staff officers . . . are those who provide specialized services to the line officials and advise and counsel them in the performance of their duties. An example of this is the company attorney, who provides legal assistance and advice to company management. The cost accountant has, or should have, a similar relationship. He keeps control records that enable him to advise the chief executive on prices to be charged for products, or services, but he does not set the price himself. Further he tells department heads and foremen when their costs exceed "standards," but it is not his responsibility to correct them. Sometimes this function is called a "control" function, but the control should be exercised *through* the line and *not on* the line. Staff "control" is really "inspection."

Other examples of proper staff functions are purchasing, engi-

neering, research and development, and traffic. The chiefs of these departments are all responsible, of course, for giving orders to their own subordinates; i.e., they have line authority over their own departments. But they should advise, counsel, assist, and service the central operating management of the organization. They should not exercise direct authority over operating officials, such as the manufacturing superintendent.

8. A. E. Benn, *The Management Dictionary*, Exposition Press, New York, 1952, pp. 313-314.

Staff Agency—An advisory instrument of management, as an outside consultant, assistant to executive of the organization, or a committee.

Staff Department—A department responsible for the development of policies and methods for the performance of its specialized functions under the immediate direction of the staff executive in charge of the department, and which cannot apply its plans, policies, or methods directly to the line units, but rather must obtain approval and do its work through the superior administrative executive.

Staff Man—An advising specialist or consultant, who may be from within the organization or from outside the firm, who has no authority to issue instructions except as specifically designated in the organizational set-up or to those of his subordinates who work with him to provide his staff services.

Staff Organization Units—Units within an organization which are charged with the responsibility for performance of certain specialized functions connected with staff service functions and activity; distinctly differentiated from operating and managerial units.

Staff Relationship—The relationship between the staff officers who provide specialized services to the line officials and who assist the line officials in the performance of their duties; the advisory and consulting relationship.

Appendix B

Detailed Attention Devoted to the Drafting, Arrangement, and Transmission of Communications and the Standardization of Method in the British Army

The standard basic textbook used in the British Army for the training of officers is known as *Field Service Regulations*. This is a small-sized textbook 5¼ by 4¼ inches.

Volume I, *Organization and Administration* (1930 edition), contains 425 pages and carries sixteen index references to the preparation and issue of Orders and twelve index references to the preparation and issue of Instructions. Volume II, *Operations* (1929 edition), contains 332 pages and carries eighteen index references to Orders and eighteen to Instructions. The chapter in volume II dealing with Orders, Instructions, Reports, and Messages has eighteen pages. There is an Appendix of eight pages containing detailed rules for drafting. The passage on arrangement reads:

Sequence and Form—An order will always be arranged in a logical sequence. This applies not only to written orders, but also to those sent telegraphically or given verbally.

The most suitable sequence is that indicated by the headings given below. Adherence to this sequence will assist the giver of the order to ensure that nothing is omitted, while the recipient, being accustomed to it, will be able to grasp the contents of the order with the minimum of trouble and delay.

Appendix C

Comparative Glossary of United States and British Military Terms

The actual organization of “staff” services in the United States and British Armies is almost identical. That is to say, in both armies, the broad division of such services into Intelligence, Operations and Training, Personnel, and Supply is the same. But the differences in terminology are confusing. Thus:

Function	Title	
	In the United States Army	In the British Army
Specialist corps and officers of various types	Special Staff Officers	Commanders or Chiefs of Technical Troops and Directors of Administrative Services & Departments
Officers assisting a commander with his functions of command	General Staff Officers	Staff Officers
Personnel	Assistant Chief of Staff, G1	Staff Officer of the Adjutant General's Branch of the Staff —Deputy Assistant Adjutant General

Function	Title	
	In the United States Army	In the British Army
Intelligence	Assistant Chief of Staff, G2	Staff Officer of the General Staff Branch of the Staff—General Staff Officer 2nd or 3rd Grade
Operations and training	Assistant Chief of Staff, G3	Same as above General Staff Officer, 2nd Grade.
Supply	Assistant Chief of Staff, G4	Staff Officer of the Quartermaster General's Branch of the Staff—Deputy Assistant Quartermaster General
Coordinator	Chief of the Staff	See Note

Note: In the British Army there is no such post as a Chief of the Staff with formations. The general staff branches (Intelligence and Operations and Training) report to a Chief General Staff Officer (General Staff Officer, 1st Grade in a Division); the administrative staff branches (Personnel and Supply) report to a Chief Administrative Staff Officer (Assistant Adjutant and Quartermaster General in a Division). The coordination of the two branches of the staff may be undertaken by the general himself or may be delegated by him to the chief general staff officer.

Appendix D

The Doctrine of Completed Staff Work

Completed staff work is the study of a problem, and presentation of a solution, by a staff officer, in such form that all that remains to be done on the part of the head of the staff division, or the commander, is to indicate his approval or disapproval of the completed action. The words *completed action* are emphasized because the more difficult the problem is, the more the tendency is to present the problem to the chief in piecemeal fashion. It is your duty as a staff officer to work out the details. You should not consult your chief in the determination of those details, no matter how perplexing they may be. You may and should consult other staff officers. The product, whether it involves the pronouncement of a new policy or affects an established one, should, when presented to the chief for approval or disapproval, be worked out in finished form.

The impulse which often comes to the inexperienced staff officer to ask the chief what to do recurs more often when the problem is difficult. It is accompanied by a feeling of mental frustration. It is so easy to ask the chief what to do, and it appears so easy for him to answer. Resist that impulse! You will succumb to it only if you do not know your job. It is your job to advise your chief what he ought to do, not to ask him what you ought to do. He needs answers, not questions. Your job is to study, write, restudy, and rewrite until you have evolved a single proposed action—the best

one of all you have considered. Your chief merely approves and disapproves.

Do not worry your chief with long explanations and memoranda. Writing a memorandum to your chief does not constitute completed staff work, but writing a memorandum for your chief to send to someone else does. Your views should be placed before him in finished form so that he can make them his views simply by signing his name. In most instances, completed staff work results in a single document prepared for the signature of the chief without accompanying comment. If the proper result is reached, the chief will usually recognize it at once. If he wants comment or explanation, he will ask for it.

The theory of completed staff work does not preclude a "rough draft," but the rough draft must not be a half-baked idea. It must be complete in every respect except that it lacks the requisite number of copies and need not be neat. But a rough draft must not be used as an excuse for shifting to the chief the burden of formulating the action.

The completed staff work theory may result in more work for the staff officer, but it results in more freedom for the chief. This is as it should be. Further, it accomplishes two things:

1. The chief is protected from half-baked ideas, voluminous memoranda, and immature oral presentations.
2. The staff officer who has a real idea to sell is enabled more readily to find a market.

When you have finished your completed staff work, the final test is this:

1. If you were the chief would you be willing to sign the paper you have prepared and stake your professional reputation on its being right?
2. If the answer is in the negative, take it back and work it over because it is not yet completed staff work.

(Adapted from an official paper by Major General Archer L. Learch, former Provost Marshal General.)

Appendix E

Work Description Sheet Analyzed by Functions of Leadership

COMMUNICATION	Reviews daily all documents, correspondence addressed to the attention of the President. Screens and refers to executive concerned for appropriate action those matters which do not require President's personal attention.
REPRESENTATION	As the representative of the President, interviews, contacts, and receives inquiries from trade association representatives, industry leaders and management personnel in outside companies.
INITIATION	Summarizes and comments on trade reports having over-all significance and interest to the oil industry.
INTERPRETATION	Acts in a liaison capacity with management personnel in the parent company and affiliates. Conveys the thoughts, opinions, and recommendations of the President.
ADMINISTRATION	
Forecasting	Initiates and prepares analyses, summaries, and digests of operating, financial, and marketing reports. Draws attention to significant trends or changes.
Planning and organizing	Serves as Secretary and Member of the Committee on Organization and Planning. Shares in the responsibility of this Committee for

conducting special studies as directed by the Board and the preparation of recommendations for board action.

Directing With reference to the President's office, responsible for the preparation of salary budgets for subordinate personnel, review of job classifications, schedules vacations, recommends transfers, promotions, demotions, and disciplinary action as required.

COORDINATING In the absence of the President while attending meetings, making trips, etc., acts as contact on all matters directed to his attention. Depending on subject, processes inquiries, recommendations, reports, statements, etc., through discussions and memoranda with executive personnel in all departments.

CONTROLLING Keeps President informed of progress and disposition of matters requiring his personal attention. Serves as Secretary and Member of the Operating Expense Budget Committee. Participates in the responsibility of this Committee for reviewing all New York Department Operating Expense Budgets, including reporting to the Board current trends in budget expense and recommendations for revisions, future policy, etc.

Appendix F

Job Description

TITLES: Secretary of the Corporation
Secretary of the Trade Association
Assistant to the President of the Corporation
Manager, Agency and Foreign Deposit, Foreign Law,
and Reinsurance Departments

DUTIES:

1. *As Secretary of the Corporation*
Prepares agendas and minutes for all meetings, including those of the board of directors. Is responsible for maintenance of corporate management records, for dissemination of information received from organizations corresponding with the Corporation through the Secretary's office, and for reading of books, periodicals, bulletins, advertising and charitable solicitations and distributing them to the appropriate departments.
2. *As Secretary of the Trade Association*
Responsible to the Chairman and Vice Chairmen for preparation and mailing of notices, agendas and minutes of all meetings, collating necessary background material, corresponding with member companies and supplying them with important data on activities of other member companies throughout the world.
3. *As Assistant to the President of the Corporation*
Acts as executive and confidential administrative assistant on all matters in which the President is involved. As such, receives all the President's mail and personally handles about 30

per cent of it; refers perhaps 50 per cent to other departments and individuals for appropriate action; analyzes and collates data on the remaining 20 per cent for presentation to the President for decision; then effectuates the decisions. Gathers data and statistics on corporation affairs. Maintains liaison with departments, affiliated companies, certain brokers and large assureds, and men in the field. (When necessary—and particularly when the President is away—provides the same kind of assistance to the Executive Vice President. Also coordinates work of President's office with that of the Executive Vice President's office.)

4. *Department Supervision*

a. Responsible to the President for over-all supervision of the Agency and Foreign Deposit Department. This entails correspondence and consultation on agency requests, maintenance of agency records, contracts, powers of attorney, and all legal and documentary files for each country. Determines records to be maintained on deposit and reserve requirements in each company. Gathers data that will help the companies to select investment portfolios, makes initial purchase of securities, and then turns over necessary data and papers to the Assistant Treasurer.

b. As manager of the Foreign Law Department is responsible to the President and to the Board of Presidents of the Trade Association for the maintenance of legal files and interpretation of foreign law affecting the operations of the insurance companies in more than sixty jurisdictions throughout the world. Work covers insurance, tax, and agency laws. Disseminates pertinent information to all departments, divisions, regional offices, agencies, and committees.

c. As manager of the Reinsurance Department advises company executives on treaties and reinsurance agreements, reinsurance matters of all kinds.

d. As a former manager of the Fire Loss Department, still assists the Executive Vice President with supervision of it. Provides advice on important cases, signs fire loss checks, handles some important correspondence, meets with important brokers, assureds, and adjustors when it is deemed advisable.

Appendix G

Functions of the Control Section of the Koppers Company

Organization. At Koppers, the first major job of the control section was the publication of an organization manual.

Members of the section interviewed the head of each division to obtain his ideas on the ideal organization for his command and studied the existing organization, down to the groups reporting to the shop superintendents and the foremen.

After the study was completed, they drew up a report describing the organization as it then was, setting forth its shortcomings and the reasons for them and recommendations for change. When agreement on the conclusions was reached with the division head, the report was put in final form and forwarded to the president.

Once the manual was issued, it became the job of the organization administrator to ensure that it kept pace with changing requirements—by making organization studies of various units and recommending changes where they were needed, and preparing and publishing material documenting the changes made for inclusion in the manual.

Related duties, as listed in his job description, were:

1. To remain conversant with existing and new concepts of organization and to analyze the value these may possess as applied to the operating problems of the company.
2. To provide advice and assistance to the management of

any component unit, on initiative or upon request, regarding the application of organization principles and plans to the existing or changing conditions with which they may be faced.

3. To conduct audits of the performance of certain component units, particularly those staff units whose operating results do not lend themselves to tangible measurements. To evaluate progress against objectives and to form and report conclusions on the value of these activities.

4. To report and recommend for further study any deficiencies in procedure, planning, scheduling, or coordination which may be observed in connection with organizational studies and audits.

5. To study and report to appropriate management the necessity of providing for succession to key positions.

Planning the Business. Once objectives and organization plans have been established, the next phase of management control is programming, that is, the integration of major plans, schedules, and requirements from all parts of the business, a highly complex undertaking in such a diversified company as Koppers. It involves gathering data on such matters as sales, inventories, manufacturing and selling costs, and general overheads for each division, and preparation of divisional summaries and analytical summaries broken down by individual cost components. All these items are discussed in detail with the president and reviewed by the operating committee before the programs are presented to the board of directors for approval.

The planning administrator, who is a member of the control section, is charged with coordination of the annual preparation of the company's programs for the immediate and near future by "obtaining, analyzing, evaluating and consolidating forecast results and by cooperating with the finance department in translating the data into finished programs."

Other duties listed for the planning administrator included:

1. Developing ways by which the company's progress may be appraised through comparison with its own past record and with competitors and through evaluation of its progress to-

ward specific objectives. Collecting and analyzing data necessary for appraisal.

2. Study of the distribution of capital investment in the various businesses in which the company is engaged.

3. Collection and analysis of data of interest to the company in planning its operation and recommending new objectives for future operations.

Control of Methods and Procedures. The third major subdivision of the control section is the procedure group, whose primary job is to study inter-unit relationships and recommend standard procedures for ensuring smooth dovetailing of activities. The procedure administrator is responsible for the development and maintenance of the company's general-management-procedures manual and for developing or assisting in the development of procedures covering new activities. He also assists in the development of internal procedures for the various units.

Reports. The basic responsibility of the reports administrator is the collection, analysis and consolidation of data on actual results of operations and preparation of concise reports to management. This involves:

1. Consideration of the types of data necessary to an adequate presentation of the company's operating results, and locating the sources of the information

2. Designing the form in which the results will be presented

3. Preparing and publishing the company's monthly progress report

4. Preparing special reports

5. Assisting the various units of the organization with their reports when requested to do so

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