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Fundamentals of Administration

No. 2

(No. 1 is the Key Ingredients  
HCO Pol Ltr 14 September 1969)

(See also HCO Pol Ltr 28 Feb.,  
1966 on Why Orgs Stay Small)

An expert on Administration, called in to straighten out or develop Admin for a company can ALWAYS be sure of one thing: IT WILL BE JAMMED AT THE TOP.

Thus he can always do one thing very effectively: HE CAN UNJAM IT AT THE TOP.

Old time business efficiency experts sometimes knew that the jam was at the top but considered this meant it was necessary to retrain the top man and this being infeasible and unpopular, went down into the plant to do time-motion studies. As it remained jammed at the top the firm seldom got more efficient.

Many tales are told about how the top needed retraining, was old fashioned and hampered things and almost none of them were true.

All organizations that are surviving at all are driven directly from the top or by a strata of executives immediately below the top and senior to any one else.

The first action in any attempt to improve an organization is of course Observation. The first thing to observe is who at or near the top in executive capacity is driving the organization.

Someone, at the top or several someones just below the top are overloaded.

This will be the one or several most important log jams or bundles of stopped flows.

A jam or inefficiency can exist on very low stratas of an organization without greatly impeding much of anything. But when such a jam occurs high up it can reduce efficiency, revenue and threaten the whole organization.

The one or more at the top are trying. They are trying hard. Otherwise nothing would be going at all.

To even hint that any retraining is needed at the top is an invalidation. Further there is no time available there for retraining.

What is wrong and what causes overwork and despair is that the staff type persons serving the high level people are not trained or organized to handle the abundance of action.

This is well within the province of an administrative expert to handle. Here he is dealing with secretaries, typists, phone operators and junior executive types who are only too willing to learn how to expedite the action for the high level key people.

All one needs to tell the key person is that he needs administrative help and that you'll see that he gets it to take the load off.

Then you organize and groove in those who directly serve him.

He operates actually on a 9 Div 27 Dept system as a person and as an executive. Those services are fully listed on a standard org board.

The larger the organization being headed, the more numerous must be the service corps that serves the key executive.

If the organization is small or he is a very junior exec he often has a secretary but really does not have a communicator. If he can't have more than one person, one would convert the secretary to a communicator who is trained to be aware of all the functions involved in a 7 Div 21 Dept org board. When his secretary learns all this well, in terms simply of basic duties, the load will come off.

But let us go much bigger. In a million man organization, the personal staff of the upper exec who carries the load would have to be several dozen people who comprise his personal admin staff only.

All the training the top man would need would come when the rest were organized and trained and would consist only of "This is your personal staff. For these functions (divisional) here is who you call." You give him the personal org board like a new phone card and let him play with it until he learns it in actual use.

The load would come off, the lines would speed up and the result in production or accomplishment would be fantastic.

This personnel staff would be trained by the admin expert, not to run the business but simply to handle and expedite all the actions of the top exec.

Overloaded execs who are near the top should also have an organized personal staff, less numerous, but still with the basic org board fully covered.

Training these personal staff members is not hard. They are usually very willing and very amazed that order can exist and that there is a way to help.

Unless one has sat in or near a top spot he might not have any idea of how overloaded these are. Or how this overload can delay or prevent expansion. Where every interview is personal and where every action contains minor confusions, the brilliance and competence of the most well meaning high executive is drained into minor chaos.

The president of the United States usually ages twenty years for every four in office. They go in looking well, they come out of office a wreck. Look at their pictures before and after. This is the toll of a relatively efficient if poorly organized personal staff.

Therefore, to handle this, a real, an efficient, a fully trained personal staff that is groomed to near perfection is vital.

The jammed condition is at the top.

If the top is served by people who fully understand Admin (as per Key Ingredients, an org board based on natural laws instead of whim, precise duties and hats) then the observations and inspections bring in the data, plans go out, get followed up, get executed, the lines fly, the users are satisfied and the load comes off.

The exact adaption of the standard org board has to be worked out on a basis of what the top exec or execs have to handle. But it will contain every division and every department and will be capable of sending out observation or supervision missions and survey users or voters and doing all the other things expected of that executive.

The Admin expert will find, with one look at the top execs in almost all companies and countries where this has not been done that no one man can possibly carry the loads and functions required of his post. Yet in almost all cases the job is somehow being done.

What an Admin expert has to do is study and list all the functions - unobtrusively - of that post and recruit and train a personal 9 Division 27 Department type staff for it, even though it is as few as one or three or as many as hundreds, depending on the organization size.

The result will be magical in its effectiveness throughout the entire organization. Plans become actuality, confusions vanish and the statistics rise.

You can thereafter work out ways to unstop lower executive posts. But you begin and make your biggest increase at the top.

They need help up there.

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