HCO POLICY LETTER OF 16 FEBRUARY 1984

Remimeo
Execs
All Staff
Computer
 Courses

Computer Series 1

WHAT IS A COMPUTER?

COMPUTER — An electronic machine for making calculations, storing and analyzing information fed into it, and controlling machinery automatically. (Oxford American Dictionary)

That, simply stated, is what a computer is.

A computer is capable of feats just so long as one does not make the mistake that it is thinking. It isn't thinking. But it can sure be made to look like something that thinks. In actual fact, the ones doing the thinking are the computer system designer, the programmer and the user.

I should mention that what I mean by "user" is not a typist or someone who simply feeds in data. The user is somebody who knows how to get data into the computer and out of it. He knows that the computer can be made to do work, and he is running that computer for blood.

Operating a computer is not operating a calculator. A computer is not something which "eases the work" or "saves time" or "permits staff to do other things". That comes under the heading of wasting a computer. Used right, they can dig up and generate income by the steam shovelful, and boost efficiency and production to the sky. They are a tool with mammoth capabilities. The state of mind to assume in using a computer is "Now how can I use this thing to enormously increase the production and income of an area?"

What's happened on this planet, obviously, is that they think the computer will think — when it can't — and so they don't do enough thinking for the computer in terms of developing uses for it and putting these into action.

One point should be mentioned which is very valuable: and that is the speed of operation which can be attained using a computer. The computer can contribute enormously to operational speed in its ability to rapidly relay information over long distances, its ability to keep constant and accurate track of thousands of individual data and actions, and its capacity for rapid data collection and evaluation for action.

The datum here is that power is proportional to the speed of particle flow. This is the real secret behind the prosperity which can arise in connection with a computer operation.

Given good ideas, a good heart, a worthwhile project and the addition of near instantaneous computer particle flow, the power of an organization becomes almost unlimited.

L. RON HUBBARD
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