

## The Five Needs of Supervision

It all came about through one of those after sessions. You know, - the big meeting was over - the speaker had closed with a challenge to management to provide training for all employees and with an appealing statement directed to each individual in the audience that we all need more education. A handful of instructors lingered around the lunch table still arrayed with dirty dishes and soiled table linens, perfecting their definitions of training and education. With academic microscopes they made clear the difference between information and skill. They recognized the values of knowledge, also the necessity of skill in using this knowledge. They spoke of the need for perspective and understanding along with techniques of performance.

A feeling of self-satisfaction which experienced instructors know too well was growing and this marked a good time to call it a day and go home. At this point one of the men said that at their next meeting he would like to get the opinion of the group on his new educational training course. This broke up the meeting with some tearing of hair and a wholesome appreciation of the difficulty of definitions.

The next afternoon a newly-appointed foreman in a rapidly growing department of a certain plant burst wildly into the conference room of one of the plant instructors which also served as his office, saying "I need help down in the shop. How the blanket blank do you put these former insurance agents and housewives to work on machines they never saw before? And they ask the dumbest questions about payday - vacation

rules - lunch regulations and the like. Why don't they just go along with the crowd and do what they are told? They ask questions about the machines and the stock which I don't know too well myself, where can I send them to get the dope? You are an instructor, so I came to you for help."

That brought the instructor up from his chair and, as they walked out into the shop, the discussion of the past evening faded from his mind in his effort to grasp the immediate situation - his foreman needed help immediately. Things had to be done, not just talked about. Together they observed situations - broke down jobs into operations - isolated problems which the foreman could handle from those which he could not - separated the things he knew from those he did not know. Clearly he had need of knowledge about his job both as to how to do it and what was expected of his department. He was young and relatively new in industrial work.

From the many conferences and discussions that followed, the problem of breaking-in new workers seemed to require something more than knowledge of the job - there was needed a skill in presenting the worker to his work. Then the complex matters of flow of material and certain awkward job sequences seemed to defy all attempts to get out the required production, until the idea of breaking-down jobs into operations and considering them one step at a time was developed. This analytical process of thinking appeared also to be a skill, that is, a technique which once learned can be applied to any situation. The habit of questioning old practices seemed important.

In the midst of worries over slow work procedures and inexperienced workers, came complaints from workers about rates of pay, overtime, transfers, ventilation, tools, lighting, and also the ever-present personal problems at home causing absence and lateness. They agreed that the irritated foreman soon lost control of such situations, but the old bromides of "keep your temper", "sleep on it", "consider the other fellow's point of view", sounded flat until the idea of skill in applying them was born.

This kind of situation has happened with old foreman as well as new, in large plants as well as small ones, in old stable organizations and new rapidly growing ones, in heavy industry plants and light industry plants, in process operations and small parts machine shops. It is because of this common strain in industrial experience that T.W.I. arrived at one of those generalizations which may not be academically true - at least it is not the whole truth - but it appealed to the supervisors and managers at all levels as practical and sufficiently true most of the time to be accepted.

It is this: "Supervisors have five needs - two knowledges and three skills." Each supervisor needs to know his job technically, and he must know his responsibilities. These knowledges differ so widely from job to job and from plant to plant that they cannot be standardised. Each plant management must see that each of the supervisors has or is given the tight knowledge of the technical aspect of his job and the right knowledge of his responsibilities. The skills are different - they are applicable to any supervisor situation from a coal mine to an automobile assembly plant. They can only be

learned by practice, just like any mechanical skill, but once learned they become habits which make for smooth team work. These are: the skill of instruction or how to put a man on a job; the skill of improving work routine or how to make better use of manpower, machines, and materials and at the same time make the job easier and safer; and the skill of leadership or how to resolve the personal element in any situation to the satisfaction of both the worker and the organizations. These three skills became known as Job Instruction, Job Methods and Job Relations respectively or simply J.I., J.M. and J.R.

It all seems so simple and so practical, but sometimes when the time comes to tell the story to the group of instructors at one of those after sessions, the academic mind takes over with many questions and numerous suggestions to elaborate. (How the human mind loves to embroider is a marvel which I will leave to the psychologist!) But one question will help to give perspective - it is, which program should come first? There are as many answers as plants and the best answer is to ask some other questions. Is the plant old and poorly equipped? Then perhaps J.M. Is the plant well laid-out but turnover high, especially during the first week? Then perhaps J.I. Are complaints high? Then perhaps the trouble is one of bad blood between supervisors and workers, and the neediest need is J.R.

This consideration might sound like training the supervisor in the specific use of three separate tools, whereas the real objective is to so modify his habits of handling employee-worker relations that he unconsciously does the right thing at all times - he finally

becomes unaware of his tools as he develops skill in using them. He becomes a real leader of men.

Now to be perfectly logical, Program Development should precede any of the three "J"s. Thus, the man responsible for all personal administration would appraise the urgent production needs and, with the help of the supervisors, design one of more training plans to meet these production needs. Such training begins with that "J" or some other training techniques which is best suited to meet the respective needs.

But, life is never logical, so the wise plant manager appraises all conditions and begins with that training program which he things is best suited to meet the situation, and proceeds with the ultimate objective of developing each individual supervisor into a more rounded personality and his entire supervisory force into a more perfect team.

C.R. Dooley

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On the train enroute  
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