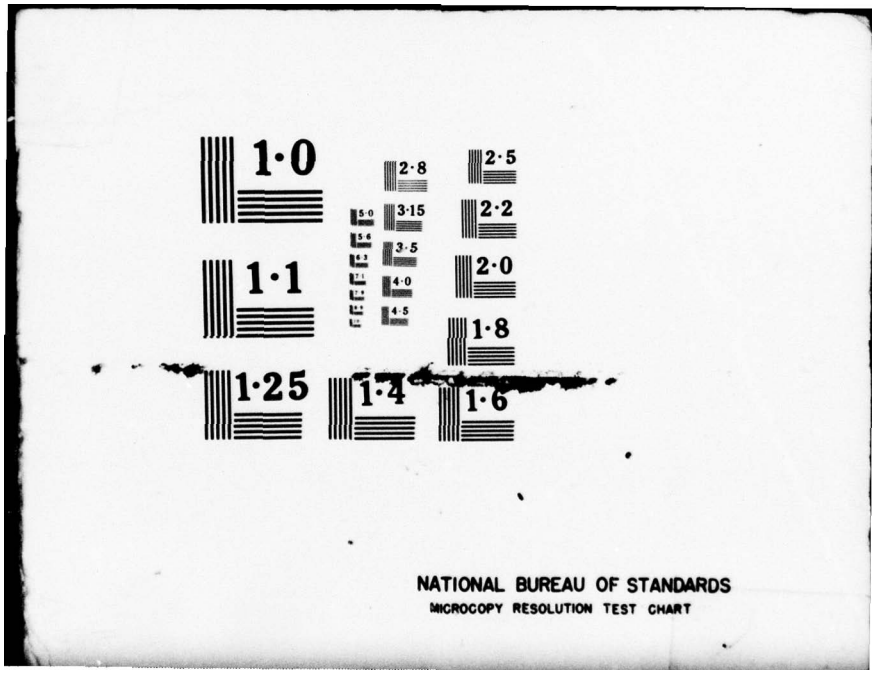
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ENHANCEMENT OF EXECUTIVE POTENTIAL

by

David Blais Howe
and
Glenn Russell Deacon

March 1978

Thesis Advisors: J.W. Creighton
J.A. Jolly

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This thesis contains an examination of previous works in the area of executive ascendancy and provides commentary on the various concepts proposed in those works. The authors' ideas as to how aspiring individuals can enhance their potential to reach executive stature follows. Whereas most previous works deal with only a few concepts of executive ascendancy, this work is presented with a view toward the overall concept as a

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ENHANCEMENT OF EXECUTIVE POTENTIAL

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ABSTRACT

This thesis contains an examination of previous works in the area of executive ascendancy and provides commentary on the various concepts proposed in those works. The authors' ideas as to how aspiring individuals can enhance their potential to reach executive stature follows. Whereas most previous works deal with only a few concepts of executive ascendancy, this work is presented with a view toward the overall concept as a multifaceted effort which must take place within a dynamic environment.

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I. INTRODUCTION

Annually successive waves of eager young men enter the business scene with minds glowing with ideas, hopes, confidence, and ideals. Too often, however, after climbing only a few rungs of the corporate ladder, the heat diminishes and the light flickers. Under the suffocation of layers of authority, the insistence of the daily burden, and the stultification of conformity, many of these young men become frustrated and discouraged. Only a few still glow. These seem to take on an added enthusiasm, shedding light on all persons and problems they approach. These men are the standouts who are looked to for the higher-level management positions, and some may ultimately reach the executive suite. This seeming miracle which elevates the few to high places in industry is really a complex of powers exercised, talents developed, courage asserted, and aims followed. But what are those powers to be exercised, those talents to be developed, and which aims are to be followed? When, where and how should one assert oneself?

There is wide agreement among top-level executives that the most critical manpower shortage today is the scarcity of good executive talent. Every day many people are promoted to key executive positions while many other executive jobs go unfilled because the right man cannot be found. Yet literally thousands of managers feel they are ready, willing, and able to move up to a job with more prestige, greater responsibility, and higher pay.

Having recognized that effective top-level executives are vital to the success of any organization, many corporations, government agencies, and universities have poured millions of dollars into research on executive skills, techniques, styles, and philosophy, and on ways to find and train potential executives. Sensitivity training, managerial grids, forced-choice rating forms, biographical analyses, and a host of other models, schemes, charts, and psychological tests have been used in the effort to identify and develop potential executive talent. The payoff from this investment has been an abundance of theories about leadership, motivational tools, and human relations skills. But despite the seriousness of the problem and the wealth of research data available, no one seems to have come up with

an answer to the question asked over and over by thousands of managers: "How do I become a top executive?" In responding to this question, one must recognize that there is no one answer, no single right way, to get to the top-level executive office.

There is a difference between a manager and an executive. Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary defines a manager as a person who conducts business or household affairs with economy. This connotes the idea that a manager is one who is mainly concerned with the daily routine and carrying out the everyday affairs of business. By contrast, an executive is defined as a person charged with administrative work of such a nature as to be accomplished in time to come, or to take effect on a future contingency. This definition tends to indicate that an executive is mainly concerned with the future. The intent here is to differentiate between managers and executives. The term 'executive' is in the context of one who makes policy and is concerned as much with externalities as with internal affairs, and one who is the ultimate decision maker with the ultimate responsibility. The term 'manager' is in the context of one who is mainly charged with carrying out policy and the supervision of internal affairs.

Having determined that no definitive answer is available for those thousands of managers who desire to advance to the executive suite, this thesis is directed at finding some answers to the more general question, "What can I do to enhance my pctential to rise to an executive job?" Chapter II looks at some of the assumptions and assertions found in the literature, some made by the acedemics, and a few espoused by some of the executives themselves. The supporting ideas are presented and critiqued. Chapter III sets forth the ideas and opinions of the authors with supporting discussion.

II. OBSERVATIONS OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

A plethora of information exists in the management literature on the generic topic of executive development. This vast amount of information, much of which is very recent, indicates at least two important propositions. One idea is that there is a need for this type of information. The other suggests that optimum alternatives, models or specific information have not been addressed. The need or requirement for information on executive development emanates from more than one source. Organizations desire the information to enable them to best prepare their future executives. This is, in its basic context, an economic consideration for the organization. This requirement has as its subset the precondition of having the ability to identify and select the potential executive and then proceed with the optimum development plan to achieve the most cost-effective product. The individuals aspiring to executive ascendency also desire the information in order to enhance their position in the very competitive environment surrounding executive advancement.

Executive development is a complex topic and, as is true with any complex topic, it is difficult, and not practical, to cover adequately in one work. The only practical approach to such a complexity is to separate it into its parts or to view only one limited aspect at a time and then observe, analyze and conclude. As evidenced by the following book titles, this is in fact how most of the literature approaches the subject:

"How to Select Executive Personnel"

"The Effective Executive"

"How to Succeed in Company Politics"

"The Nature of Managerial Work"

"Magic Short Cuts to Executive Success"

"Executive Career Strategy"

"Development of Executive Success"

"An Approach to the Identification of the Potential Executive"

However many shortcomings exist in much of the literature due to this approach. One common problem is the lack of integration of the specific topic into the whole picture. When this integration is accomplished, it provides

a check on the study itself to see if it fits correctly; that is, if the specific topic is adequately and correctly covered. Additionally, integration of the individual topic into the whole picture provides a check on another shortcoming, that of overemphasis such that the importance of the topic has been exaggerated with respect to the entire problem.

The problem of individual topics becoming surrogates in practice is not uncommon. Aspiring managers will try almost any "tool" that purports any promise of success in an attempt to improve their management performance in the area of executive selection. This is a function of the lack of viable management tools for executive development that are understood and practical and proven. There may, in fact, not be such a tool. But the temptation to reduce the complex to a manageable system is always present because this is part of the perceived role of management.

Previous literature has usually focused on three areas or aspects of executive development. There has been extensive research on the identification of personal characteristics that purport to describe successful executives. A second area of effort has concentrated on the

description of the job requirements for executives. The remaining area of concentration has tried to identify the executive process, that is, a description of how successful executives accomplish their jobs. In some cases, the studies would have the readers believe that the conclusions drawn and solutions proposed will solve the important executive development dilema. This is merely the part surrogate of the whole phenomenon previously described.

Executives are dynamic, their jobs are dynamic, their methods of coping are dynamic, and there is no reason why executive development should not be dynamic. The study of executive development then, for whatever end purpose, should recognize the dynamics of the entity. The person, the job and the process must all be viewed as a system and this system has both organizational and individual implications and actions. The following examples indicate how the literature tends to lose sight of the objective of studying the whole.

A. PSYCHOLOGICAL, APTITUDE, AND PERSONALITY TESTS

Judging from the widespread attention given to the issue of psychological testing during the 1950's and 1960's, this area lends itself for discussion as an example. In 1960, Ward [1] received questionnaire replys from 1,610 managers describing test usage in their companies. Fifty-three percent reported that tests were used. Several other surveys reported similar results. As an overall figure it is reasonable to estimate that as many as 60 to 70 percent of the firms in the country used ability or aptitude tests, with considerably fewer firms using personality tests.

The companies that did test used a wide variety of tests. Typically, a mental ability test was used, as were some personality and interest tests. Due to the heavy emphasis given to testing in past years, a wide range of tests were developed including, among others, the Wonderlic Personnel Test, the Shipley-Hartford Test, the SRA Verbal Test, the DAT Abstract Reasoning Exam, the Watson-Glaser Critical Thinking Test, the Davis Reading Test, the Kuder Preference Record, and the Guilford-Zimmerman Temperament

Survey. Even the federal government developed a battery of tests which it used for most types of internal management selection decisions. For those companies using tests to help make personnel decisions, their use varied directly with the level of the managerial position. The higher the level, the less likely tests were to be used. This finding was not surprising in view of a study showing that only 4% of a sample of top executives felt that tests were the best selection method for top management positions [2]. For these executives, their own personal judgement was the overwhelming favorite as the best way to pick good executive personnel.

Although testing is still used in some firms, its usage appears to have fallen from favor. This may be due in part because several articles have been published which set forth methods for "cheating" on these tests. A more likely reason, however, is the general atitude of executives that their personal judgement and the career performance of those under scrutiny are far better indicators of executive potential. Those firms still using various test instruments should be cognizant of the fact that a test cannot take into account all of the necessary factors, such as the personalities of the people associated with the job, company

politics, and the dynamic environment of the job. Tests focus on only one aspect of an individual, such as aptitude, managerial style, or personality traits. Men are too complex, and the management environment too dynamic, for even a battery of tests to accurately predict success or failure in an executive role. For these reasons the authors feel that psychological testing, personality testing and aptitude testing are, at best, only small indicators of the individual and should not be heavily relied upon. Not withstanding the abundance of literature on the subject, these authors feel that all too often the scholars have lost their perspective and have advanced their testing procedures as a panacea.

B. BIOGRAPHICAL DATA

"As of 1964, 38% of America's big business executives had technical backgrounds, that is degrees in engineering or natural science, or equivalent on-the-job experience. The shift toward technical background as qualification for high corporate responsibility is proceeding sc rapidly that within another decade or two the majority of the country's 'captains of industry' will be men who speak the language of

science and engineering as well as of business, able to bridge the gap between the two 'cultures' opened up by the accelerating advance of modern technology." This is the principal finding of a 1964 study [3] of the social and cultural backgrounds of approximately 1,000 top officers of the largest U.S. corporations.

This study was initiated in response to the growing use of biographical information as a management selection tool. Empirical procedures were supposedly used to develop scoring weights for the items of a standardized biographical inventory. In effect, elements of persons' past behavior - marital histories, jobs held, activities in high school and college, educational levels, hobbies, past successes and failures, etc. - are treated as separate items to be compared against defined job behavior categories. In this way, items of a biographical inventory were scored to yield predictions of typical behavior in the future. The resulting typical behavior inventory was thought to be free from many of the usual difficulties encountered in personality and interest tests. For example:

(1) the inventory was thought to be empirically developed;

(2) it was linked directly to job behavior;

(3) it was thought less likely to be "faked" because it included information of actual past behavior which, if desired, could be verified by independent means.

Owens' evaluation of the usefulness of biographical information for predicting job behavior [4] follows:

1. The method is merely an extension of the typical application blank and is likely to be more acceptable than many tests.

2. Results showing which items significantly predict executive job behavior can aid greatly in understanding the important antecedants of executive effectiveness.

3. Empirical validation of biographical items against actual executive behavior assures that only job-relevant questions will be asked, thereby guarding against charges of discrimination or "invasion of privacy" by tests designed to "explore the psyche".

There are two examples of biographical data which seem to highlight the misuse of this type of information. First

there is the corporation whose policy is such that divorced managers are not promoted above middle-level management positions. The idea is that if a man, or a woman, cannot handle his home life, then he is not fit for executive positions. The second example is the executive who looks at the biographical information in an effort to discover only one facet of the applicant's background, namely, did the individual learn how to be organized in his childhood. The idea here is that this executive feels that only those people who were taught to be organized as youngsters are capable of filling executive positions today. In both of these examples the names have been left out for obvious reasons. However both cases cited are factual and although each position may have some merit each has gone to an extreme in the misuse of biographical information.

Biographical information was once thought to constitute the most fruitful source of information to be considered for predicting executive success. Although biographical information is still used today, most firms no longer use these data as a means of determining executive success.

C. COMPANY POLITICS

Company politics is the byplay that occurs when one man or a group of men want to advance themselves or their ideas regardless of whether or not those ideas would benefit the company [5]. This definition of company politics allows for the fact that some politiking may be helpful to the organization. Usually politics has a negative connotation in terms of the work environment. "Number One's" concern about his position to gain recognition that is favorable for him, at someone else's or the organization's expense, is the usual example familiarly constructed.

The executive who uses politicking to his advantage without jeopardizing his position, and perhaps even enhancing the organizations' position, is known as a consumate manager. He is considered a skillful leader, an innovator and implementor, and someone who is sensitive to the environment. The fact that this individual used politicking in his efforts is not even recognized most of the time.

"If you want to get ahead, you've got to play the game", is advice often heard from those who overtly politic for "Number One" and occasionally by those reticent few who have been passed up and blame it on "company politics". It is very easy to become engrossed in this endeavor and it will eventually, if not immediately, stop one's progress, or worse, effectively end his useful career. Spending too much time politicking probably means a person is not paying enough attention to performing his job.

All of this is not to say that politicking is not to be done. If goal congruence exists or can be bent to the situation, then the byplay, if no one else's perceived interest is visibly diminished, will be accepted. This assumes that one's ideas are not restricted by any other company rules such as too much money required for the idea, too risky, etc. If other executives are involved, it should be only those needed. As an example, one might bring along that executive whose job is most affected by the proposals. Sell that person first. If this cannot be done, the probability of the idea's successful materialization is lowered and varies indirectly with that individual's power base.

The above discussion is simply to emphasize that politicking can be good or bad and that it is easy to let the politics outstrip the endeavor for promotion which is dependent primarily upon performance on the job. A "good" impression includes the quality of patience, and it is not necessary to be overanxious to appear eager and willing.

D. THE PURITAN WORK ETHIC

"Work hard and keep your nose clean". This is advice that for many years was commonly interpreted as "do your job, work hard, and don't interfere or get involved". This myth would not be the advice to render to those who aspire to executive positions. For the rank and file this may be acceptable, for every organization needs 'Indians' to execute the 'Chiefs' policies. But an executive has to be innovative and this requires involvement as well as hard work. Mistakes will occasionally be made but this should not deter even the most conscientious individuals. This does not construe to condone mistakes that are careless in nature, for the successful executive needs to be considerably more attentive to detail than the "prudent man rule" would suggest.

The preceeding discussion should bring into focus that the Puritan Work Ethic is not necessarily wrcng, but it is incomplete in its advice for those who desire promotions in as short a time as possible. An executive must not only be effective and efficient on the job; he must also be visible. To do a good job and not get recognition may mean stagnation in a position. This can carry the ramification of labeling the incumbant as not being innovative, motivated or capable of additional responsibility.

Another point should also be made. It has to do with the semantics, and specifically the connotation, of the term "hard work". For an executive, the term "hard work" does not mean just "work hard", as in long, arduous hours. It also means to work effectively and efficiently. But the reality is that thousands of managers "work hard" but are not advancing, and certainly have little or no hope of attaining the executive position. The Puritan Work Ethic, as espoused by many as the way to advancement, is simply not sufficient.

E. EXECUTIVE RESPONSES TO SITUATIONAL STIMULI

There is always a great deal of interest in the subject of early identification of the potential executive. Although several ideas have come forth none have succeeded as predictors of a man's future success or failure in the executive role. However any ideas along these subject lines are of special interest to the possible candidates for the executive job. One idea is to study successful executives' responses to situational stimuli. A composite of these responses can then be used as a basis for reprogramming one's thought process in order to respond in a "favorable" manner.

Leshko and Vosseteig [6] studied situational stimui via questionnaires entitled "Executive Judgemental Perceptions" which were sent to more than 200 corporate executives and 86 federal executives. The executives' responses were used as a data base for validating the development of a predictive model. This study was concluded as "encouraging...and incomplete". A follow-on study was conducted by Rowe, Rudeen and Wenke [7] using a revised form of the Executive

Judgemental Perceptions questionnaire. Using a sample size of 212, this study concluded that "the use of the responses of the executives as a basis for a scoring system for the questionnaire appears to be valid.....". In other words, they claim that an individual's response to the questionnaire can be used to predict the potential success or failure of that individual in an executive role. The authors feel the results obtained from the aforementioned studies appear to be too broad and too general. Further research in this area could prove to be fruitful.

One conclusion from a study of this type was reached by Burlem [8] who found that a select population of executives are recognized by their peers as standouts due to the effectiveness of their individual actions. This select group was found to be particularly motivated as executives. Additionally, this group had a great need for power and a very low need for affiliation with peers. This result is not particularly surprising in view of Maslow's works, but at least the results are believable.

F. MANAGERS AND MOBILITY

Jennings claims that it is a widely established fact that most management jobs can be mastered in a year and a half to two years and that from then on the manager is doing the work with a minimum of effort [9]. If the manager is moved to another job, masters its requirements, and is moved to a third job, he can, in a few years, get more intensive training and experience than other managers. Although there is merit here, Jennings' main theme is that managing is largely mastering the skills of mobility and that this is a fast way to the top. He loses his perspective of the fact that a good executive must be well experienced and not just a fast mover. Additionally, too many moves from company to company, which Jennings suggests as a viable alternative, will likely gain one a reputation as a gypsy and undependable. In most organizations loyalty is expected and that gypsy reputation can be very difficult to overcome.

Elsasser [10], after a relatively good discussion on executive development, picks up on Jennings' idea. In describing a manager who does not have upward mobility of

his own, Elsasser presents his "rising star" concept. Here, he sets forth the idea that if one has lost his potential for verticle promotion, the best way to get ahead is to attach himself to some other individual who has the potential for verticle promotion. The premise is that if one makes himself indispensible to his boss, then when the boss is promoted he will take the indispensible subordinate along with him. This ploy might work in some very limited way, but in general the individual will probably never see the executive suite except through the boss' door.

G. TIME-SPAN OF DISCRETION

The new executive will realize that his expanded scope of responsibility is a function of an increased discrete job discription and of a vast increase in his discretionary latitude. This is desirable for organizations as it reduces the amount of control required for individuals and because it allows for the use of creativity and provides for greater self-actualization and satisfaction.

One tool of management that has recently gained attention is the Time-Span of Discretion (TSD) concept.

Elliot Jaques [11] developed and pioneered this measurement of the job role from his work at the Glasier Project. Its interest to executives is the possibility that it can be used as a tool to identify potential executives and, in theory, to determine who would be capable of promotion at any level. The study basically confirms and provides a measurement method for the notion that executives judge their subordinates by the periodicity of unsupervised time prior to the time corrective action is required for job performance at a sub-standard level.

Hansen [12] best describes TSD as accountability for the work of subordinates as a requirement of the executive. To satisfy that requirement, an executive must assure himself of the continued adequacy of his subordinates' work. He does this through periodic reviews whose frequency may vary; the more confidence he has in his subordinates' work, the less frequently he will review it and the less confidence, the more often the review will be made.

Individual subordinates are able to sense the level of work which they are required to perform and know if that level is too low or too high for them. If they feel it to be consistently at too low a level, they tend to become

bored; if it remains too high, they show symtoms of worry and depression.

The proponents of the time-span method of work-level measurement contend that the amount of discretion which an executive allows his subordinates to use is the factor which determines the level of work sensed by those subordinates. More specifically, they claim that the sensation of level is a direct function of the maximum length of time during which an executive permits his subordinates to exercise independent judgement in the pursuit of a task. This has been called the "Time-Span of Discretion" of the work role and has been defined by Jaques [11] as "the longest period of time which can elapse in a role before a manager can be sure that his subordinate has not been exercising sub-standard discretion continuously in balancing the pace and quality of his work". The limits of time employed in TSD measurement are hours, days, weeks, months or years, as appropriate.

Jaques has identified two different types of work roles and the technique of TSD measurement differs for the two. The first is the 'single-task' role in which a subordinate performs tasks, one at a time, in the order in which the

tasks are assigned. In this case the subordinate's exercise of discretion is limited to decisions about the method and speed with which each task is to be performed. In such a role, a manager may review the work during the progress of the task, immediately upon its completion, or at some later time. The review may be a direct one by the manager, or it may be accomplished indirectly on the basis of information obtained from others. Whatever mechanism is used to perform the review, the TSD of a single task role is found by determining the longest period of time which the manager is prepared to let elapse between the start of any task and his review of it.

The second type is the 'multiple-task' role. In this role the subordinate carries responsibility for a number of concurrent tasks. In this case, part of the job is to program the progression of each task so that all are completed on-time and in an acceptable manner. For this type of role, TSD is established by that task to which the manager assigns the longest unreviewed target-completion time.

The above discussion describes, in a rudimentary way, the main principles of time-span measurement. A detailed

description of the techniques can be found in Jaques' "Time-Span Handbook". In practice, the measurement of TSD can prove to be rather more difficult than might at first appear. However the sum of the training and experience required to use the method effectively is not greater, and is probably less, than is needed to assure the successful application of conventional job evaluation techniques. Certainly the total time required of executives, managers, subordinates and analysts is less for time-span analysis than for job evaluation methods of other kinds.

TSD can be a powerful quantitative tool in assisting the selection/monitoring process for executives. It will require further research and evaluation to be used in the mode of executive selection. However it should not be relied upon as the absolute tool. It ignores many other desirable qualities that become very important to top-level executives, albeit performance, getting the job done, is always the most important. Each subsequently higher level in the organizational hierarchy is increasingly more discretionary in nature and the pitfall of the "Peter Principle" probably will not be avoidable.

H. CONCLUSIONS

In surveying the literature, two important failings were found. First the preponderance of the literature fails to discriminate between top-level executive functions and management functions at the various levels. In fact, the bulk of the literature is written about managers or the general management function with implications that the executive rcle is of a similar nature. This implication is valid only in the limited sense that executives are still performing some general management functions, but this implication fails to take into account the fact that the executive spends very little time with these general functions and is primarily devoted to the exclusively executive functions.

Many authors also fail in their work due to a lack of perspective. It is common practice to break complex problems into simple parts for analysis. However errors arise when the analyses are concluded without regard for the relationship of the part to the whole. The executive function is made up of the man, the job and the environment.

No one part, and certainly no narrow aspect of any one part, can be analyzed and properly understood without giving due regard to the way in which the pieces fit together. Perspective is often lost, or at least badly warped, when one part of the executive function is given exaggerated importance. All too often, authors have placed undue significance on one small part and have ended by claiming a panacea to the problems of the management world.

III. AN HEURISTIC VIEW OF THE EXECUTIVE

At the margin, all jobs are different, all people are different and in fact both the jobs and people are likely to be different from day to day or along any other measurable time scale. Most discussions of groups of anything usually center around the common attributes or perceived similarities. The differences, even though they may be small in number, are averaged out for the group so that the discussion can speak of an individual entity as a representative of the group and all the other entities of the group are envisioned as being the same as the representative.

The preceeding may seem superficial at this point but the significance is that when executives and their jobs are discussed, the fact remains that executives and their jobs are different from one another, even if, on the average, there is much similarity. It is paramount then that the perspective of individuality and uniqueness should temper

the many generalizations that, for expediency, are used in defining or describing executive processes, traits, qualifications or methodologies.

In this chapter the authors will present some factors to consider from the individual's point of view. The factors or ideas do not represent ends in themselves and are certainly not equally weighted in importance. In recognition of the dynamics of the executive environment, their particular value is subject to change with an individual's current situation. The ideas presented are not new or revolutionary or even inclusive but it is hoped that a consideration of the topics will allow the individual reader to enhance his probability of success in executive ascendancy.

The various ideas are presented separately but the reader is cautioned to make no judgement of the individual sections. After reading all of the separate parts the reader must assimilate them into one whole integrated concept. The reader must also add his unique position and environment to the whole concept in order to complete the picture. Those ideas presented which do not apply may be discarded and the remaining ideas considered for

application. As discussed in the previous chapter, erroneous analyses and conclusions result from considering the individual parts without regard for their relationship to the whole. At a minimum this "food for thought" should spawn an analysis of philosophies and an expanded awareness of the environment.

A. ENVIRONMENT

Daily our lives are assaulted with information some of which is not even recognized. Information recognition defines our perception of ourselves, other people, work, nature, in short, our environment. The facility to recognize discrete information in the environment and comprehend the relationship of that discrete information to other discrete information forms a basis for understanding the environment. This understanding is cummulative and defines our awareness of our surroundings. Some people are more aware of their environment than others and some have essentially the same perspective. It should be noted that a given perspective does not imply a corresponding reaction to the information. A reaction, which is action in the deterministic sense, to environmental stimuli may be

rational, non-rational or irrational and may vary in detail. This is to say that the same or more relevant information to various individuals will not necessarily result in the same or a better decision predicated on that information. However in general, for good decision makers the better the information the better the decisions will be. More information is not necessarily better information as some information is non-relevant in terms of detail or in quantity relative to the situation.

To a decision maker, a user of information, environmental information has an inherent price - time. The ability to be able to process information quickly in order to put it to use is a valuable asset. But the ability to process information into relevant and non-relevant categories is not the only desired objective. It is limited by what the decision maker recognized as information in the first place. Therefore it is highly desirable to recognize more of the environment, in breadth and depth, to provide a better perspective. Information overload can exist but a rational decision maker will use a time constraint, natural or predetermined, to limit the evaluation of relevant information if a decision must be reached.

Presumably then, a better awareness of the environment, the "big picture", and the ability to identify the relevant information puts the user of that information in a better position to react to the situation. As has been noted previously, the environment is dynamic. Thus a reliance on what was before or what worked before is not necessarily going to be applicable now even if the situations are essentially similar. The awareness of the dynamics of the environment is part of the "big picture". Awareness is recognizing also that people may react differently to the same stimuli for at least two reasons. One, as was previously mentioned, is that people are not necessarily rational users of information. The second and most important reason is that, given they are rational, they have perceived different information from the same stimuli. Our individual perceptions of the present environment modify our decisions, our evaluation of information and the recognition of other information.

The executive's selection of information should be based upon his interests and needs. The environment surrounding his career specifically includes his present job. An awareness of the job environment should include that

information which has relevance to making better decisions in the job as well as information that will enhance the organization, his fellow workers, and in particular his boss, and himself.

The sources for this information should include a varied list of publications, professional organizations, community activities, and so forth. The object is to garner enough information so that it can provide a basis for a projection of current organizational, political, financial, technological, societal, and international trends. A basic understanding of human personalities and organizational formal and informal relationships can help to explain and provide a basis for many internal and external organizational problems and projections. This concept is most useful in analyzing the problems associated with implementing decisions and policy in organizations and in one-on-one communications. The business/organizational environment relies heavily on projections and the better the understanding of the many relationships affecting the environment the better one should be able to project and foresee potential problems as well as opportunities. Usually the earlier in time that problems are identified the more easily they can be corrected. Similarly the earlier an

opportunity is recognized the more a competitive advantage can be gained.

Perhaps basic to the premise of understanding the environment is an understanding of one's self. The ability to analyze how one fits into the environment includes the notion of how the environment is affected by his own actions. This is specifically important in personal relationships - how does one affect the people he communicates with? An executive must make decisions based on his keen perception of the environment but his job is not then over. The decision is worthless to the organization if it cannot be implemented in an efficient and effective manner that will achieve the desired results.

A specific example of increasing the scope of the environment related directly to an executive's position, or any manager's job for that matter, is the concept of not only knowing what the boss desires but what the boss' boss and his boss desire. The objective here is that one can do his job more effectively as well as assist his immediate boss in ways that he previously never envisioned. The benefit from this awareness of the environment will allow the executive to work "with" his boss rather than "for" him.

This subtle difference can greatly enhance one's reputation and value to those he works "for".

The environment is a dynamic and pervasive construct within which we all must operate. Those who cultivate the facility to understand and project meaningful relationships that relate to their job objectives are in the position to better make relevant decisions and to implement ideas that achieve desired outcomes. The "big picture" is central to the efficient and effective outcome of executive performance.

B. COMMUNICATIONS

The ability to effectively convey ideas and thoughts to others, in a clear and concise manner, is the one attribute most often mentioned in describing the requisites for successful executives, managers and supervisors of all levels. The ability to communicate well cannot be overstressed as a means to enhance executive potential. In fact, the lack of good communicative abilities could well be an insurmountable barrier to executive ascendancy. Communication does not refer simply to public speaking.

Communication has four basic parts: speaking, writing, listening and remembering.

1. If You Would Be Heard - Speak Well

The importance of speaking well, as a business asset, cannot be exaggerated. Public speaking is not what is meant here. What is important is simple man-to-man talk, the sort of talk which takes place between fellow employees about everyday company problems. Such talk is vital because it is the prime method of securing the good communications which are a "must" in any well-run organization. Therefore if one desires to stand out from his peers, he should learn to speak grammatically, enlarge his vocabulary, and make sure of his pronunciation. He will find that whatever it costs him will be worth many times that amount.

To speak effectively, that is, to make oneself understood or to gain a point, it is necessary to adhere to certain basic principles of good speech. When a speaker has only a hazy conception of what he is talking about, or if his mind is foggy or fuzzy so that he does not see clearly the outlines and limitations of his topic, he can hardly

expect his listeners to be other than confused. The thing to do is to think through the whole subject and be certain that ideas and conclusions are formulated before beginning to speak. Take a few moments to think, and do not pop-off in answer to a question.

Tact is most important especially when addressing business elders. One should, of course, be courteous and not interrupt them. But above all, remember that bright ideas are not always bright when viewed in the light of the elder's experience, and hence one should present them in an "I'd like to know what you think of this" manner, rather than to slap them down on their desks. Futhermore in any suggestions one may make to his elders, at all costs avoid doing so in any way that gives the impression that "old age" and "old-fashioned" are synonymous.

Davis [13] gives two excellant pieces of advice. First, he says to follow the pattern of all good speakers, which is: give a short, precise introduction; then the body, or substance of the discussion; and follow with the summary or conclusion arrived at. Second, he cautions us to remember that however great our capacity to speak well

becomes, at times it is better to keep our mouths shut and appear dumb than to open them and leave no doubt.

2. If You Would Be Read - Write Well

As in the case of the spoken word where one must speak clearly to be understood, everything must yield to clarity in the written word. But in the latter instance, it is even more difficult to stick to the point and to avoid wandering off into a lot of "ifs, ands and buts" which make the message incomprehensible. And the use of proper words and phrases also assume greater importance. You can sometimes correct a slip of the tongue with no great harm but the written word is a matter of permanent record.

There is daily need for translating business data into clear, concise narrative. It may consist of letter writing or the preparation of reports but whatever needs to be written needs to be written well. And this is an art which requires study and practice if one is to become proficient in it. The average man often writes in such a manner that his selection of words and the sentence construction he uses is, while understandable to him, so

garbled that it is most difficult for others to understand what his message is all about. If one does not want to fall into the average category, he should shoot for the clearness, brevity and punch illustrated by Davis' [13] example of the East Indian lawyer's letter to a client:

> Dear Sir:
> Unless you pay the rupees within seven days,
> we shall take such steps as will cause you the
> utmost damned astonishment.

3. On The Art Of Listening

There is no denying that the capacity to speak and write well are great assets, but it is questionable whether they are more important than the ability to listen well. Therefore, anyone who learns how to listen well has an advantage over his peers and will accordingly progress more rapidly. Learning through listening is primarily an inside job, meaning inside action on the part of the listener. The action needed in order to improve listening capacity is to replace some present attitudes with others. Interest, for example. Bad listeners usually declare the subject boresome

after the first few sentences and are then inattentive. Good listeners say to themselves: "What's he saying that I can use? What worthwhile ideas has he? Is he reporting any workable procedures? Anything that I can cash in on? Anything or any ideas which I can take advantage of?"

Good listening is hard work. This is because our mind works much faster than we talk and it is difficult to slow down our thinking speed when we are in the act of listening. It is what we do with this excess thinking time while someone is speaking that separates the good listeners from the bad. Poor listeners soon become impatient with the slow progress the speaker seems to be making and their thoughts wander. Good listeners try to anticipate what the speaker is going to talk about; they mentally summarize what has been said; they weigh the evidence being presented by mentally questioning it; they listen between the lines, which is to say, they pick up meaning from the changing tones and volume of the speaker's voice, from his facial expressions and from his questions.

The purpose behind the need for listening well is so the listener may ascertain all of the facts. If one does not listen well, he will have difficulty sorting the wheat

from the chaff and may miss the point of the discourse entirely.

> "Know how to listen, and you will profit
> even from those who talk badly."
>
> (PLUTARCH)

4. Memory

A good memory is one quality which executives always state as a prerequisite to success. When the boss wants information he wants it fast. Nobody can remember everything and this is an acceptable fact of life. "I don't know, but I'll find out immediately", is an acceptable reply in many instances. But this is not good practice if it occurs too frequently. There are many techniques available for improving memory. Find one that works and make use of it. The payoff will be immeasurable in time saved and respect gained.

5. Summary

There should be no doubt that effective communications is a fundamental and absolute requirement critical to the quest for executive ascendancey. Some of the points to remember are: (1) job performance will be affected by communicative abilities; (2) the ability to successfully market oneself will be affected by communicative abilities; (3) effective implementation of ideas and decisions depends upon the ability to clearly communicate; (4) promotions hinge upon judgements and appraisals made by superiors.

C. ACEDEMIC TRAINING AND WORK EXPERIENCE

1. Education

The importance of formal education in achieving advancement later in one's career life is generally accepted, especially in view of the "professionalization of

business executives". The need for higher education is well demonstrated by the competition among the large corporations for the best of each year's college graduates. But there is still a difference of opinion among the executives themselves as to the appropriate education for the profession. With todays sophisticated and rapidly advancing technology, which course of study offers the best preparation and best enhances executive potential? Newcomer [14] says, "Since the corporations themselves recruit primarily from graduates in engineering and business administration, and then select their executives from within, there is little chance that a young man interested in a business career should select other courses". Scientific American [15] reports, "The entrepreneur and the capitalist who played such a major role in the organizing of large corporate enterprises at the turn of the century has practically disappeared from the top ranks of industrial management. His place has been taken by the career executive, especially by professional men among whom engineers are the most rapidly growing group". This report goes on to say that executives with law degrees constitute the second largest grouping and has been of relatively constant proportion throughout the years.

Have we then, defacto, answered the question of which acedemic backgrounds best suit an executive? The answer can best be found in the following comments made by executives offering candid appraisals of their own educational experience [3]:

1. (B.A. and M.B.A.): "I feel my lack of technical knowledge is a distinct handicap. To help overcome this, we have had a full-time senior corporate executive to advise me on the long range implications of technological change."

2. (B.A. and LL.B): "It would be especially helpful to me to have had formal education in the physical sciences."

3. (B.A. and LL.B): "While I took mathematics and basic scientific courses in college, some additional engineering-type courses would have been helpful."

4. (B.S.E.E. and M.S.): "In retrospect, formal training in various aspects of business administration would have been helpful."

5. (B.S. in Engineering): "Technical training was adequate, but most fortunately, I had a sound secondary education

emphasizing the 'humanities' - Latin, Greek, History, English. I am not sure but what this secondary acedemic course was not more valuable in the long pull, than my engineering degree."

6. (B.S. in Engineering): "Training in expression, both speaking and writing, was lacking in my formal education - its importance to business is greatly overlooked."

As one searches the current literature and talks with todays executives, the opinion most often expressed is that both a sound technical knowledge and a solid business background are desirable. For the young man who aspires to the executive position, perhaps the best choice would be the B.S. in Engineering followed by the M.B.A. or the LL.B. Regardless of the title of the degree, of real importance are the abilities gained from the course of study. The engineer gains factual technical knowledge but, more importantly, he gains an analytic ability from the engineering approach to problem solving and decision-making. Unfortunately, he also tends to gain a narrow perspective. By following with an M.B.A. or LL.B., a business knowledge is gained as well as a broadening of perspective. It is

this combination of technical knowledge, analytic ability, business background, and broad perspective, which seems to provide the best preparation and best enhances executive potential.

2. Work Experience

There is no substitute for experience. There are no magic formulas for success which diminish the requirements for experience gained on the job. The word experience, as used here, does not simply mean years of work in an organization but the learning which comes from those years of work. Each job has its own requirements for successful completion and, therefore, each job presents new learning opportunities. What must be understood is the need to gain different types of training as advancements lead through successive positions during a career. Various types of experiences must be encountered so that a well-rounded background is acquired. Each organization has certain unique work-related training requirements but rather than discuss this sort of detail, it is important to discuss general types of learning which should be acquired via work experience regardless of the particular organization.

Central to the issue of experience, job performance is crucial. All employees are expected to improve their job performance somewhat as they gain in experience but for anyone expecting to rise to the executive position, excellant job performance is usually required at all times. This is not to say that a learning period is not allowed for new positions. But in order to attain excellance in the performance of a job, one must do more than just get the job done within the guidelines of the official job description. In addition to knowing the job description and what is required of you, there must be an awareness of how this role relates to other roles within the department or division and also within the framework of the overall organization. It is this increased awareness of the larger organizational relationships which often allows an individual to better understand the needs of his boss, and the boss' boss, and so on. Through an understanding of the needs of the superiors, many jobs can be performed more efficiently and effectively than otherwise might be true.

Experience is expected to bring an understanding of how to effectively work with others. Effective subordinate utilization, which relates directly to one's own job performance, requires an understanding of the subordinates'

various strengths and weaknesses, needs, goals and motivations. Proper delegation of authority and responsibility strongly influences the ability to get jobs accomplished. Good working relationships with peers and superiors require similar understandings and also strongly influence job performance.

Few executives have sufficient time to devote to the many items on their daily agenda. However, through proper management of their time, they get the job done. One of the most important concepts one should learn is that time is a resource to be used just as wisely as money or any other limited, valuable resource. Time management is absolutely essential and can be learned. There are several good articles, books and films which illustrate various techniques for the effective management of time.

In order to successfully utilize the many things learned, self-discipline is needed. This is an important executive ability which must be mastered through experience. Self-discipline is a multifaceted attribute which, when properly applied, leads to improvement in job performance. Knowing the limits of one's responsibility and authority and never overstepping the bounds, even during crises which

appear to warrant it, is one type of self-discipline which can and must be exercised. An awareness of how much argument is acceptable by superiors, or how far they will allow themselves to be pushed, is essential and self-discipline must be utilized to present arguments forcefully but not to the point of career injury. When the job seems tiresome, or the golf course is "calling", self-discipline provides guidance to maintain the effort in accomplishing one's work even to the point of putting in extra time so that even the smallest of tasks is not left unfinished or marginally acceptable. Self-discipline can be properly applied in a negative sense, such as using self-restraint, and in a positive sense, such as taking courses at school to help in the performance of one's work. The importance of self-discipline increases directly with each advancement up the career ladder. There are many ways in which self-discipline can manifest itself but the important point is that self-discipline is a necessity. It is one of the character traits upon which one will surely be judged by one's superiors.

Decision-making abilities can and must improve with experience. Executives do not wait for decisions to fall from the sky. They work hard to apply their analytical

abilities in order to process all pertinent information in arriving at good decisions. Although it is generally the responsibility of the organization to provide sufficient opportunity for the individual to exercise and improve his decision-making abilities, each individual must fully accept the responsibility for the results of decisions made. It is mandatory, therefore, that past experiences, analytical abilities, scund judgement and ccmmon sense be brought to bear on all decisions. Emotional and other irrelavant issues must not be allowed to prevail upon, or interfere with, good decision practices.

Effective decision implementation is yet another area which experience can improve. Even the best of decisions are useless unless properly implemented. It is not necessarily the decision itself which is judged, but rather the results of the decision. Experience should provide sufficient opportunity to learn how to effectively implement ideas and decisions. There must, of course, be an awareness of the organizational policies, rules and regulations so that violations do not occur. There must also be an awareness of the organizational structure so that it can be reasonably known how a perturbation at some point will affect the other parts. There must be an awareness of

the people within the organization for it is through people that decisions are implemented. The actions and reactions of those affected by a decision must be positive in the sense of accomplishing the desired ends or obtaining the desired results. Since people are the key elements of effective decision implementation, it should be understood that most people generally react in one of the following four modes:

(1) rational mode: given all of the information as to why a decision was logically reached, and persuaded that this decision is the only proper one, people reacting in the rational mode will tend to support the decision because they agree with it.

(2) bureaucratic mode: regardless of the information at hand, large changes are unacceptable, but several successive small changes are generally acceptable to people reacting in the bureaucratic mode.

(3) political mode: regardless of the information at hand, decisions are generally rejected unless it can be shown how there is a positive return for those people reacting in the political mode.

(4) non-rational mode: since it is not usually possible or desirable to give subordinates complete information as to why decisions were reached, most people are required to accept decisions based on little or no understanding of all the background data and, as a result, they react in dissimilar ways based upon their individual perceptions of the goodness or badness of the decision as it affects them.

Effective decision implementation thus depends upon an awareness of both the key people in the organization, who will actually influence the implementation process, and the mode in which they are expected to react. Informal group leaders must be considered as well as formal line managers within the subordinate structure. Effective working relationships, as discussed previously, are obviously related and important to this issue.

Successive positions, whether lateral or vertical movements, must offer the opportunity to broaden one's working knowledge of the organization. With few exceptions, overspecialization in one department or division can lead to a limiting of career opportunities. In general, a broad

knowledge of the organization is of greater value to an executive than a detailed knowledge of only one facet of the company. Similarly job responsibility is important in each position. Each new role should offer an increased scope of responsibility. Specifically job responsibility refers to the degree of discretionary control over resources, such as manpower, money and other capital assets. These two issues are necessarily related. The higher a position is within the management hierarchy the greater is the working knowledge required of all facets of the organization in order to successfully carry out the responsibilities of most effectively and efficiently applying the resources within one's control. Inherent in this theme is a knowledge of what one's resources are, where they come from, and how they are controlled. The fundamental process which controls resources is the budget process. It is, therefore, imperative that prospective executives comprehend all facets of, and all key players influencing, the organizations budgetary processes.

The discussion of experience thus far has been on things to learn to do. Davis [13] relates several things which one should learn not to do, as follows:

(1) Do Not Harbor Resentment: Irritating setbacks and the shortcomings of associates should be taken in stride. The best way to get along with others is to be what we know we ought to be, to do what we know we ought to do, and to give respect as we hope to deserve respect.

(2) Do Not Undermine Colleagues: If one sets about digging a hole for somebody else, he will probably end up buried in it himself.

(3) Do Not Criticize Too Quickly: It is a far better thing to be free with pats on the back.

(4) Do Not Be a Slave Driver: Whip-cracking is probably all right for mule-skinners but it has little place in business. Those who drive are apt to have those who are driven discover that cracking the whip is an indication of lack of character and leadership in the driver.

(5) Do Not Be a Crybaby: Getting sore or crying when trouble hits does nobody any good. The fellow who makes a hit is the one who keeps his mouth shut and does something.

(6) Do Not Be an Apple Polisher: There is no surer way "to get into the doghouse" with fellow workers than by "polishing the apple" and getting labeled "brownie". One never knows when he will need a friend and he can have none better in business than his fellow workers, so he had better cultivate them, or at least avoid making them antagonistic.

(7) Do Not Be an Office Politician: There is not a worse curse on any business house than internal politics and anyone playing this game usually ends up on the blacklist.

(8) Do Not Be Opinionated: Even the boss does not have all the answers so it is not likely that one can fool others that he does.

(9) Do Not Worry: There is no use worrying about things which are inevitable nor about those over which one exercises no control.

This discussion of what types of learning need to be gained from working experience is not all inclusive nor is it meant to be. The objective is to afford some awareness of what career experiences should offer. Many of the ideas

discussed above may appear obvious to the reader but to overlook some of these ideas can be serious.

D. OPPORTUNITY

1. Recognize Your Opportunities

Each day new opportunities are present to be taken advantage of by those who recognize their existance. The recognition of opportunity is not always simple. A few words from the boss about a problem or knowledge of some area that needs improvement are examples of opportunities for someone to act upon. These are rather straightforward and easy to see but they could easily be overlooked as not being a part of one's particular job. Most opportunities are not so recognizable and are often just subtle indications from the environment around us. Here again, one finds the need to be aware of the environment, as discussed earlier. An awareness of the environment broadens one's perspective so opportunities can be more easily recognized. It is not possible to specifically describe how one recognizes opportunity but it is possible to say that

opportunity-recognition is vitally important and can be enhanced just by knowing that opportunities exist all around us. Be alert for any indication of ways to help others at any time. Don't overlook the chance to explore the ideas of others. Make suggestions to those who ask for advice. Be open for suggestions from others. Many ideas and suggestions may appear unimportant at first but given due consideration they may prove useful or at least lead to some other concept which is useful.

2. Opportunities Can Be Created

The creation of opportunities is a possibility which should not be overlooked. If one controls something that other people need, one has power over them, even if they are much higher-ranking than he is. They need cooperation, and one can use his power to gain favorable assignments or other opportunities. Of course power must be used very subtly, especially with men of higher rank. If one is too direct, he may create resentment and other people will try to take his power away. The best way to use power is to help someone whenever possible.

As Schoonmaker [16] indicates, many men feel that collecting and using IOUs is unethical but every legislator in the world uses the technique and it is used almost as widely but much less visibly throughout the business world. Applied in a constructive way, it is a legitimate and effective instrument.

As Bennett [17] points out, before one will be allowed to take advantage of an opportunity to move to another position, either laterally or vertically, there must be someone available to replace him in his present job. It is very important to ensure that at least one subordinate has received sufficient training and experience to move up as a replacement. One wants to be considered as indispensible to the company but not to his present position. By conscientiously carrying out his duties to train his subordinates he will retain mobility which will enhance his ability to create, and take advantage of, opportunities.

E. ETHICS

It is not the intent of this discourse to elaborate upon the authors' beliefs as to what constitutes good or bad ethics. However the authors feel that it is appropriate to suggest that whatever one's moral principles, qualities or practices, there are two basic guidelines to be followed. First, one's code of ethics for his personal life should be similar to his code of ethics for his business life. Second, his ethical standards must be inviolate. In this way, business associates and social affiliates, often one and the same group, will know what one stands for as well as what he will not tolerate. One's personal reputation is built upon his moral creed and must not be allowed to waver. A mans' word must be as binding as any legal contractual document for his honesty and integrity are at stake.

These intangibles - moral codes, personal reputations, honesty and integrity - are part of the man. They go with him and often preceed him. It is the authors' opinion that any job, position, task or assignment which calls for a violation of one's ethics should be rejected completely

unless the job can be done differently so as not to compromise those ethics.

F. CAREER STRATEGY

Most managers do not control their careers. They do their jobs, leave the career decisions to their superiors, and hope things will work out. They may change their jobs once in a while but usually in reaction to immediate dissatisfactions or opportunities rather than as part of a comprehensive strategy. They know neither where they are going nor how they are going to get there. This failure to plan can have tragic consequences. Whereas some managers end up as executives doing what they really enjoy, many realize that they dislike their jobs or the lives they live. A few recognize these facts before it is too late to change but most do not. They find themselves stagnating in jobs that displease them but are too old or have too many family obligations to take any chances.

1. Steps to a Career Strategy

A. Accept the fact that there are some inescapable conflicts between the individual and the organization.

There are many areas in which one's interests and the organization's are nearly identical, some in which they are unrelated and others in which they are opposed. This rather obvious fact is hard for some men to accept. They prefer to believe that there are no real conflicts, that all problems and frictions are caused by poor communications, misunderstandings and so on. They do not want to believe that, even if communication were perfect and no misunderstandings occurred, conflicts would still arise because there are opposed interests. What is good for the organization is not always good for the individual and vice versa. If one does not accept this simple fact, if one assumes or acts as if he assumes that no differences exist between his interests and the organization's, he can never become truly independent of it.

On the other hand, seeing conflicts where none exist or unduly emphasizing those that do can be self-destructive because superiors will regard one as disloyal, troublemaking or provoking. One therefore needs to strike a balance, recognizing common interests as well as conflicts of interests, working for the organization's aims when possible and his own when necessary, being loyal but not blindly loyal.

B. Accept the fact that many superiors are essentially indifferent to one's career ambitions.

One is a means to an end for his superiors, not an end in himself. They are primarily concerned with their own careers and ambitions and with the survival, growth, and functioning of their unit and the organization. They are therefore indifferent to the job progress of subordinates except for the effects these have on them and their duties. They are not opposed to others' ambitions. They are simply uninterested in them. Since they are responsible for their units and the organization, not other peoples' careers, any other attitude would be imporper for them. These obvious facts are also hard for some men to accept. They want to

believe that their superiors care for them, that they are not alone. Personnel men and their superiors work very hard to create and maintain this impression since it helps them to acquire and control people. They communicate in a variety of ways that the sky is the limit or that great things are planned for you. But thousands of managers have already discovered that they do not mean it, and many more will discover it when they are passed over for promotion, get fired, do not get a raise, or are trasferred to some unpleasant place or job "for the good of the organization".

C. Analyze goals.

An intelligent career strategy obvicusly requires a clear understanding of one's own goals. If one does not know what he wants, he cannot get it. Unfortunately relatively few people ever analyze their own goals carefully. They simply accept the aims that other people say they should work toward. If they do reach these goals, they may find their success meaningless and empty because it does not provide the satisfaction they anticipated.

If in fact a person is primarily concerned with reaching the top of the executive pyramid, good. But if he wants something else from his career, it is best not tc have false illusions. Otherwise, he may waste his life pushing in directions that cannot satisfy him.

After establishing his gcals, and having determined whether they are congruent with company goals so as to maintain perspective, he should determine whether these goals will fulfill his needs. Each job in a career will satisfy some needs and frustrate others. It is therefore crucial to understand which needs are important and to select a career that will satisfy them. Several needs are listed for consideration but this list is not comprehensive and should vary in importance and content according to individual desires:

(1) The need for security.

(2) The need for social acceptance.

(3) The need for status.

(4) The need for a good family life.

(5) The need to live in an area you like.

(6) The need for variety.

(7) The need to learn.

(8) The need to use your skills and abilities.

(9) The need for independence.

(10) The need for time for yourself.

(11) The need for achievement.

(12) The need to benefit society.

(13) The need for power.

(14) The need to define yourself.

(15) The need for money.

When exploring needs, do not be hampered by conventional values that do not go beyond the mundane and material. Needs are neither good nor bad in themselves. They simply exist as part of human life. But one must understand his needs or he may spend his life chasing rainbows. As needs change, so must goals change. One must always be willing to candidly answer the question of whether or not he is still willing to pay the high price demanded, in foregone or frustrated needs, for his goals.

D. Analyze assets and liabilities.

It is not enough to understand one's goals. He must also understand the assets that will help him reach them and the liabilities that will hold him back. Nobody would try to make a company's future plans without a clear understandingof its assets and liabilities. Obviously one cannot plan his own career without a similar understanding.

E. Analyze opportunities.

One should determine as carefully, systematically, and unemoticnally as possible the opportunities he really has in his own or another firm to achieve his aims. It can be very hard to make this analysis because many firms are dishonest about the opportunities which really exist. They try to create the impression of a much better situation than actually prevails.

Fortunately other sources of information are available in addition to interviews with personnel managers and superiors - published data, stock analyses, friends'

opinions, the counsel of management consultants, personal observations and so on. Using these in a systematic way can result in a much clearer understanding of real opportunities.

F. Plan a career.

Although the analyses outlined above can be time-consuming and even annoying, they make it possible for one to do something that very few men ever to - to decide where one is going and how he will get there. As noted earlier, businessmen nearly always plan the future of their firms but almost never plan their careers. They take a job and then let inertia and their emotions take over. They may stay at that job long after they should have quit or change jobs prematurely or for irrational reasons. They are therefore rarely successful in reaching all their goals rather than just their monetary and advancement goals.

G. Chart the progress.

Whether one changes jobs or stays with his present employer, he should keep track of his progress by writing down his goals and strategies, both long and short term, and he should revise his plans according to changing conditions and shifts in his goals. The job that looked like a stepping-stone to bigger things may turn out to be a dead end. The top executive who helped before may leave the company and is no longer able to be of help in future promotional situations. The goals that seemed so important may lose their attractiveness as one approaches them. One must therefore periodically examine his progress and his feelings so that he can make the necessary changes in his plans.

2. Self-Evaluation

One can measure a company's assets and liabilities fairly accurately and can compare them with each other by stating them in terms of an unambiguous standard - dollars. But one cannot put an exact value on judgment, supervisory

skill, originality, or any other characteristic, nor can one compare an asset such as originality with a liability such as a low energy level. One can only make a subjective judgement on how one compares with other people on each dimension. The group one measures himself against and the meaning of each measurement depends on his goals. For aspirants of executive ascendancy, one is competing for promotions and assignments with men who are far above ordinary and one has to compare himself with them.

Schoonmaker [16] suggests one format for self-analysis. First, set forth a list of characteristics which are desirable for an executive. One such list is as follows and may be modified as desired:

1. Technical competence
2. Administrative knowledge and ability
3. Marketing knowledge and ability
4. Supervisory skill
5. Oral communication skill
6. Written communication skill
7. Ambition
8. Energy level
9. Originality
10. Sociability
11. Breadth of perspective
12. Sense of humor
13. Desire to excel
14. Business judgment
15. Cooperativeness

16. Ability to budget time wisely
17. Formal education
18. Special training
19. Ability to organize other people
20. Success at meeting budgets
21. Success at meeting schedules
22. Reputation with superiors
23. Reputation with other companies
24. Reputation with the general public
25. Skill at negotiating
27. Skill at developing subordinates
28. Experience
29. Age (in terms of whether it helps or holds you back)
30. Other

When this list is completed, rate each characteristic as follows:

-2 means much poorer than the men at your level

-1 means poorer than the men at your level

0 means equal to the men at your level

+1 means better than the men at your level

+2 means much better than the men at your level

Having rated oneself on each characteristic on the list, collect all positively rated characteristics into a column labeled "assets". Collect the negatively rated characteristics into one of two columns with one labeled "fixed liabilities" and the other labeled "changeable

liabilities". Zero ratings can be left out or placed under the heading that indicates whether being average in this characteristic will hurt or help. When completed, these three columns will give an overall picture of strengths/assets and weaknesses/liabilities as one sees himself.

The next step is to indicate briefly how to take advantage of each of the assets listed. Also, indicate briefly how to compensate for each of the fixed liabilities listed. Now indicate ways in which changes can be made in the changeable liabilities. Other people do not always see a person as he sees himself so listen carefully to superiors' appraisals and compare these appraisals with the self-analysis.

G. MARKETING YOURSELF

The executive has to market himself. This notion does not imply prostitution of values or short cuts in job performance. On the contrary it is an enhancement that requires additional effort to ensure visibility of a sound and desirable product - job performance coupled with those

attributes that make an individual desirable to associate with in the organization.

Getting the job done efficiently and effectively within the organizational construct is paramount. The executive who has the reputation of getting the job done by being resourceful in resource allocation and creative in the face of adversities will move up the chain of command rapidly. The results of successful job performance are easily marketable.

Every organization has specific personal qualities that are sought after for their top executives. The whole-man concept is one that should not be overlooked. By the whole-man concept is meant that a person should have a well-rounded personality - a person who can comfortably associate with most people because of his varied background and interests. This necessitates being well read and knowledgeable of many subjects and particularly current affairs. Athletics participation such as golf or tennis and social activities such as bridge or dancing may be desirable.

Dress and grooming as well as health are particularly important. Dress and grooming reflect taste and attention to detail - qualities that are seldom overlooked. Executives may be seen by many people each day and are looked upon as representatives of their organizations. They must present a pleasing appearance by being well dressed and groomed. Their appearance should reflect the philosophy of their organizations. Proper dress and grooming reflect an attitude of self-discipline and of one who cares about what others think of him. Good health has also become more important. The physical energy required to sustain a high level of effort required in many executive positions can kill a person in poor health. Organizations do not want key executives who may be subject to physical ailment due to poor physical health that will preclude their performance in the organization. There is mounting evidence in todays' society that people are their own worst enemy when it comes to maintaining a healthful body. Moderate exercise may be one easy way of maintaining a healthy body and mind. The executive who does not have to be overly concerned with poor health will be more valuable to the organization. Dress, grooming and a healthful appearance are always noted at interviews.

One sign that can be exhibited which supports the notion of potential for assumption of increased responsibility is organization. The individual who appears more organized will give the impression that all is under control. This subtlety, coupled with a calmness of mannerisms and persuasion, exude confidence and direction of purpose. An air of efficiency and effectiveness is created that can be sensed even though no actual work is being performed. Good personal organization is conducive to efficient performance of the job.

Closely associated with organization is the concept of not appearing over-burdened with the requirements of the job and the organization. An executive must make himself available to the members within and outside of the organization. The appearance of being in a hurry or not having time is a highly visible way of losing credibility. The executive must be available in the organization not only for those up the ladder but also for those at the same level as well as below. For those at the same level and below the availability manifests itself as concern. For those up the ladder the availability appears as an indication of interest and motivation for future or increased responsibilities.

The executive who can "step into the breech" and take the responsibility establishes a highly visible platform for recognition of getting the job done under adverse conditions. An executive who is available and can perform in challenging or unusual circumstances can take advantage of opportunities that allow him to "step into the breech". Tasks that present themselves as particularly vulnerable and that need drastic and immediate attention require an executive who will get the job done. Every organization has unexpected problems that are not necessarily under the cognizance of a responsible person or if they are accorded to an individual the job may not get done due to incompetence or more likely the job is of especial import so as to necessitate special attention. A job such as this is the "breech" and it gives that hard-charging executive an opportunity to step up and take charge. The organization has a need for someone who can step up and demonstrate that they will take on the tough job and accept full responsibility. It takes confidence to do so but the hierarchy will respond generously to those who take control. The executive must be available, confident and most obviously a performer.

H. OTHER PRACTICAL CONSIDERATIONS

This section deals with several items of interest which did not appear within the major topics already discussed. Each of these items are important both individually and as part of the overall executive enhancement concept being presented.

1. Executive Development Programs

There is a renewed awareness in industry today that a progressive company, in order to insure its stability and continuity, must provide for the development of personnel who have potential to assume the responsibilities of successful executive leadership. Hence many companies have turned to formal development programs. Executive development can be defined as a systematic process designed to develop existing key personnel to the point of maximum effectiveness in their present assignment and to produce a supply of qualified replacements to meet future executive needs. For many organizations, it has become not just the

wise thing to do but instead a necessity if organizational instability is to be avoided.

One very important factor in the enhancement of executive potential is the organizations interest in subordinates' continued successful development and advancement. It is wise, therefore, to seek employment with an organization which has an established executive development program. It is also necessary to have a sound understanding of the factors which constitute a good program. Although there is a lack of any generally accepted standard executive specifications the experiences of companies with systematic executive development programs lead Mitchell [18] to the conclusion that there are a number of requisites which are essential for a successful program. These are:

1. The program must be based upon the fundamental premise that development needs can be diagnosed, development plans made, executive techniques learned and progress appraised.

2. The program must be based upon the particular needs of the individual as well as the needs of the organization.

3. The program should be administered in a simple, straightforward manner.

4. The program must have the complete support of the top executives and must be accepted as a line function.

5. An organizational climate conducive to executive growth must be in evidence.

6. Periodic appraisals must indicate strengths, weaknesses, overall performance and promotability in specific terms.

In addition to the above six requisites, one should be sure that the line management hierarchy realizes that executive development is largely self-development and that the development of personnel within the program should be planned and performed on an individual basis as much as is practicable. There are several reasons for this: (1) an individual must learn by doing regardless of other training techniques to which he has been subjected, (2) an individual's development can be planned more effectively if it is based upon the strengths and weaknesses indicated by

his on-the-job performance, (3) there is less chance of a "fair-haired" or "crown prince" attitude, and (4) on-the-job coaching and counseling by superiors are more applicable. Remember that no development technique which will serve as a substitute or replacement for on-the-job experience under a good superior - subordinate relationship has been found. Thus the success of on-the-job experience depends largely upon the acceptance by line executives of the responsibility for the subordinates' continued successful development and advancement.

One example of a good attitude toward executive development was related during an interview with Mr. P.B. Auerbach, an executive with Sperry Systems Management. Mr. Auerbach related that each individual within the management hierarchy is responsible for the development of his direct subordinates. As nearly as possible, each subordinate is groomed for development and advancement to the next plateau of responsibility. In addition the eventual development and advancement of the individuals in the one-to-two year time frame and also in the three-to-five year time frame is considered. As a result, for each position within the management structure, it is relatively well known who is approximately ready for advancement now, who will be ready

in the near future, and who is expected to be ready in the longer term. It is this executive acceptance and active support for an executive development program which promotes an atmosphere that is conducive to effective and efficient development of executive potential.

2. Timing

When an opportunity exists for advancement, whether laterally or vertically, the questions dealing with appropriateness need to be addressed. Is this the proper time to move into the position being offered? Have I sufficient background experience to cope with the requirements of this new position? Does the new position offer new career enhancing opportunities? Why has a vacancy occurred? What is expected of me in this new role?

The answers to these questions, as well as others depending upon various circumstances, should act as guidance for any decision to accept a new position. Many vacancies occur for the simple reasons of retirements, resignations, offers from other companies, or other routine reasons. However it would not necessarily be appropriate to move to a

new position with a fancy title but little or no authority. It may also be inappropriate to accept a new position which reduces the scope of your responsibility, such as loss of discretionary control over resources, loss of freedom in one's work, or loss of vertical mobility. Also, some vacancies occur due to firings. Perhaps a Project Director has been fired because his project is in extremely poor shape and has been effectively condemned by higher authority. Is it appropriate to take command of a sinking ship?

This issue of timing may, of course, appear irrelevant because some organizations will not accept a rejection to an offer of advancement for any reason. In this case, the issue of appropriateness may lead to the issue of timeliness in departure from the organization. Again, this issue is interrelated with the overall environment and must be kept in proper perspective.

3. Flexibility

The concept of flexibility simply refers to the maintenance of freedom to accomplish one's work in an

effective and efficient manner. Too often, inexperienced people have allowed themselves to become too entangled in one aspect of their work thereby allowing oversights to occur in other areas. Flexibility also refers to the ability to maintain poise during adverse conditions and being able to "roll with the punch." Additionally, flexibility refers to the ability to respond quickly and easily to new tasks or assignments required by superiors in addition to, and perhaps with priority over, one's current work. Lastly, flexibility refers to openness in the acceptance of new ideas, practices or procedures.

4. Mobility

Mobility has been mentioned as part of previous discussions. However it is of sufficient importance to be discussed briefly as an individual item. Mobility refers to maintaining a posture of readiness to move to new intraorganizational and interorganizational positions. The need for intraorganizational mobility is obvious for the sake of continued advancement within the present company. The need for interorganizational mobility is not great at low levels of the executive hierarchy but becomes important

at the higher levels. Throughout a career with any organization, records are compiled concerning appraisals of one's work performance. These appraisals include both strengths and weaknesses as judged by superiors. Thus, the longer a career with a given organization, the better known are both one's strengths and weaknesses. At the higher executive echelons, it may well be that promotability is based more upon relative weaknesses than on relative strengths of competing aspirants. Since an executive's reputation is generally based upon demonstrated strengths, his weaknesses may be unknown by other organizations. Therefore where an opportunity for future advancement may not exist in one's present organization due to his known weaknesses, many opportunities may exist with other organizations due to a lack of knowledge of those weaknesses. This idea may convey negative feelings but the truth of the matter should not be overlooked.

5. Interviewability

Although the boss may not want or know how to give honest feedback, a person needs it and one must know how to convert a superficial, unenlightening interview into an

informative session in which he learns what the boss thinks of his work and what changes he would like to see. If one can get his superiors to work with him on improving himself, he will become a better executive and get much more support from them. One can get the information needed by following a few simple principles:

(1) Do not be defensive. A major reason bosses dislike giving honest appraisals is that they often end up as arguments. The boss points out what he thinks are weaknesses and the subordinate tries to prove that they are not weaknesses at all. He gives excuses or makes lengthy explanations but the boss only feels that his judgment is being challenged. An entirely different atmosphere can be created by taking his criticisms seriously. Do not offer excuses or explanations. The purpose is not to prove that one did a good job but to learn where he stands and what he must do to improve. Listen respectfully to the boss' comments and ask what he thinks could be done for improvement.

(2) Be specific. Appraisal interviews may rate one on everything from personality traits to cost effectiveness or productivity but these ratings are usually so general that

one does not know exactly what they mean or how to improve. One can convert these general ratings into usable information by asking specific questions. If for example the superior says there are weaknesses in leadership, ask him why he feels that way. If he says there has been a poor job with management development, ask him what he wants done. By asking specific questions, one will learn what really counts in the company, what the criteria for evaluating performance really are. If these criteria are incompatible with one's talents, perhaps he should leave. If he stays he can concentrate his efforts on the areas his employers feel are important.

(3) Ask for specific performance-oriented targets. It is not enough to know what the boss thinks of one's past performance. One must also know what he wants in the future. If possible, these targets should be committed to writing so that there will be no misunderstandings. Targets should include both performance on the job and self-development. What sort of training, knowledge, or experience does he want and how can it be measured? The more explicitly these targets are defined, the better one will be able to focus his activities in the right direction.

6. Common Sense

Everyone is endowed with common sense to some degree. But the term "common sense" implies a capacity for making practical or prudent and reasonable decisions. This capacity for practicality, prudence and reasonableness is, perhaps, the most important quality necessary for good managers and executives of all levels. However the authors feel this is often the one capacity least exercised, or least noticeable, among many decision makers. These decision makers receive the necessary factual information, have sufficient experience, and have sound training but still they are unable to grasp some intangible which leads their decisions astray, perhaps only a small variance from the decisions arrived at by the true executives but enough so that the decisions are judged as less than optimal.

The intangible which is lacking is good, old common sense. Common sense refers back to the opening discussion about the environment. Common sense is another term for that ability to be able to perceive one's surroundings and grasp the meaning of all the things happening within the

environment. For the executive, his environment includes both the environment internal to the organization and the environment external to the organization, such as the marketplace and the competition. Common sense must pervade all analyses and must be exercised at all times. To be unaware of one's environment due to a lack of common sense is to be effectively blind.

I. SUMMARY

As one steps back and appraises the thoughts generated by this chapter the conclusion that all of this is common sense and requires determination and work is reached. This is as it should be. Without determination or motivation, without working for knowledge and superior job performance, and without common sense to understand the environment including the people who are a part therein, the executive will have a difficult time achieving key positions in the organization.

As the nature of learning is we may not see the relevance of a particular piece of information immediately or we may give too much importance to it temporarily. Thus

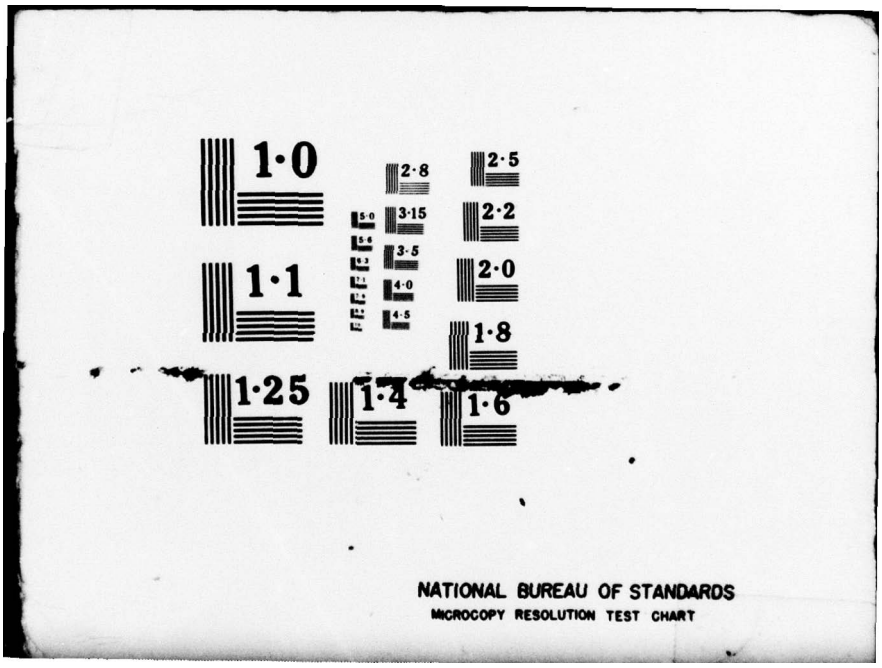
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we should bear in mind that no one part, technique or theory portrays the exclusive means for executive ascendency. The executive environment is dynamic and unique to each individual.

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, the reader must now assimilate all of the ideas presented into one cohesive and whole concept. He must survey his own particular situation in order to determine the validity and applicability of each of these ideas. Only after this process should analyses be made, conclusions drawn or judgements made.

IV. SUMMARY

Many managers aspire to ascend the management hierarchy seeking the executive positions - those key organizational roles which determine policy. Management literature is replete with analyses and descriptions of the manager's personality, job function and environment. These studies run the gammut from attempts to predict executive potential based upon psychological and aptitude tests to measurements of job responsibility to espousing fanciful shortcuts that will enable the aspiring manager to become a successful executive. The bulk of the literature fails to discriminate between the top-level executive functions and the general management functions. Additionally many authors lose perspective in their work. Their particular topic of study fails to relate to the whole environment and an undue emphasis and purported significance is attached to their viewpoint as the long-awaited answer that will solve the management problems.

The path to the executive suite is not patented and this seems to be a function of the fact that there is no one way that is guaranteed to work for any two individuals regardless of their similarity. However there exist many factors that should be considered by all managers in their quest of executive stewardship. These factors may be of value in enhancing one's potential on the competitive path to the top. The recognition of the environment is the pre-eminent requisite as it tempers all judgement. The executive environment is dynamic and the executive is aware of the fact that one may have to deviate from the expected to be successful.

The main effort of this thesis has been slanted in the direction of those individuals who desire to attain success on the executive ladder. The authors believe that an executive is an executive and the chosen field of endeavor is not a determinant in the matter of realizing prima facia success. Of the several, but not inclusive, factors presented for consideration in one's analysis of executive potential it is important to remember that one's unique environment changes continuously. The synthesis of the ideas presented should be guided by the fact that no one

factor is the solution for all problems and the relative importance of the individual factors is regulated by one's perception of the environment.

Creativity to accomplish the job in an unexpected manner, disregarding previous experiential solutions, may be the necessary ingredient to successful accomplishment of an objective. Executives take responsibility when it is a requisite tc accomplishing the objective. Performance is a given attribute, however unconventional its execution. Superfluousness does not clutter the executive's envircnment but attention to detail, those details that move the organization, is accounted for. The recognition of those significant details within the environment is a characteristic of potential executives. Motivation to "get the job done" must pervade the entire spectrum of factors.

The executive and his environment is a large topic to analyze in one work. Perhaps the proper perspective for the aspiring executive to keep in mind is that executives at the top have related that no previous experience has prepared them for their executive position.

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