

quarrel. They are meeting a certain need and they are providing a satisfactory service where that particular kind of service is needed. But we are going too far. Some places of business look like the convention grounds of a group of equipment makers. Who is to blame for this? The seller of the system? No, the buyer. Why should any business have any particular system just because some other business has it? Why should every store record be a visible record just because some of them are visible? Why should all time cards or job cards be of a certain kind? Why should every sales department have the same kind of maps? And so on ad infinitum. No reason whatever.

We are suffering from too much standardization in certain quarters. Companies seem to pride themselves that they have but one kind of typewriter, one kind of calculator, one kind of job ticket, one kind of stores record, one kind of control board. Just as if business had reached the point where all one needed to do would be to pick out what appeared to be the best set of systems for a business and go to it.

Too often these systems are bought without any consideration whatever being given to their maintenance cost. Too often a smooth salesman makes an executive believe that anybody can maintain them. He brings in a ponderous looking set of records or a mysterious looking machine and he proceeds to prove to us that his system is very simple.

Rarely are these systems made part of any general plan. The business that houses a statistical department where all data pertaining to every branch of the business are compiled, analyzed, and developed into real reports is generally free from this curse of all systems, but a business without such centralized departments exhibits a conglomeration of well-advertised brands of systems. Some day we shall buy the tools of management the same way as we buy production tools, and when we do, purveyors of systems are going to have a hard time. Then we shall not have selling us accounting systems salesmen who cannot do simple double entry bookkeeping; neither shall we have to listen to an army of salesmen who lack fundamental training in the particular fields in which they are trying to sell some of the tools necessary to obtain managerial results.

No system is a substitute for executive ability. No system can replace the brain power needed to man a business. No system can be a panacea for the ills of an incompetent management. Systems are nothing

more than a means of giving expression to the ideas of those who manage. When any business attempts to solve its problems with systems instead of with knowledge and experience, its doom is sealed. Executive ability without system means chaos and inefficiency, but system without executive ability means disaster.

The Apprenticeship System in a Large Paris Department Store

By Julia Lesser¹ 658, 871

IN THESE days of elaborate departments of training and carefully worked out plans for the training of new employees in our large department stores, it is interesting to note that the old apprenticeship system still prevails, though slightly modified, in the large continental department stores.

At the largest department store in Paris, employing a personnel of well over 5000, and doing a business easily comparable to that of our largest New York stores, the following is the system of training new employees.

The young woman, who must be at least 16 years old, makes her application to the employment department giving information about her education and previous experience if any, the number of languages she speaks, whether she lives at home with her parents, her parents' business, etc. She must wait a minimum of two weeks, usually more, after entering this application before receiving any answer as to whether or not she will be engaged. During this time, an investigation is made of the truth of the statements on her application and an inspector is sent to observe her home and family conditions.

When she enters the store's employ, she is given a medical examination to make sure that she is strong enough for her work, and then a brief interview with the director who acts as personnel manager, in order that he may make her acquaintance. She is then placed as apprentice (the word used is "debitrice," which means literally "debtor") in a selling department. The head of the department to which she is assigned and his assistants are entirely responsible for her instruction in the ways of the store. She is assigned minor jobs in the department at first, such as

¹Planning Department, R. H. Macy & Co., New York, now abroad studying European department stores.

running errands, doing up packages for special orders, and making herself generally useful, and later occasionally assists the sales clerks in making sales. In some of the stores using the old cashier system, she is sent by sales clerks with customers to make payments and wrap merchandise. Thus the information she picks up about the department's methods is acquired very gradually and in the course of her work and her acquaintance with her fellow workers.

During the twelve to eighteen months which she must spend as an apprentice, she is transferred about to two or three selling departments and usually spends a short time becoming familiar with the general location of the reserves and something of their system. At the end of her apprenticeship she is assigned to one of the departments in which she has been "debitrice."

In the first month or two of her apprenticeship, the "debitrice" is more or less on trial, and if she passes this period of surveillance she is practically assured of a situation for many years to come, for the labor turnover of this store is very small. The apprentice is paid weekly at a day rate for a six day week. Her wages vary according to her age, from 7.85 francs per day for girls of 16 to 16.10 francs for those over 23.

For the most part it is taken for granted that the young "debitrice" lives at home with her family, for it is almost impossible for her to support herself on these earnings under any other circumstances. As a "debitrice" she is not provided with her lunch by the store, as the regular employees are, but is given an hour and a quarter to get her lunch outside of the store or to go home for it. She finds it necessary to spend a minimum of about three francs for her lunch, and can only succeed in getting it thus cheaply at some neighboring convent which provides meals especially for young working girls. It is interesting to note that the "debitrices" are practically never observed to bring lunches from home.

The hours of work are from 9:00 A.M. to 6:30 P.M. from Tuesday to Saturday, and from 1:00 P.M. to 6:30 P.M. on Monday. Usually the "debitrice" is required to come about fifteen minutes before the store's opening to help uncover counters and set out merchandise.

When the "debitrice" becomes a regular sales clerk, she is provided with her lunches by the store and earns an average of about 500 francs a month. It should be noted also that experienced sales clerks are

occasionally taken on directly by a selling department and are not required to come in as apprentices.

Reviews

Psychology in Business Relations. By A. J. Snow, Ph.D. A. W. Shaw Company, Chicago, 1925, pages xv, 562. (15:658)

Under one cover Dr. Snow has presented a veritable carnival of business psychology. It is a text on advertising, on salesmanship, on selecting workers, and on marketing all rolled into one. There are separate books written on the psychology of each of these subjects which contain less material than Dr. Snow has succeeded in crowding between these covers.

Those much overworked "springs of human action"—instincts—the author finds not only unnecessary for his presentation but he seems to be very suspicious of their existence. In this he has with him the modern thought in psychology and the bulk of recent evidence. But it will strike the reader unusual not to find half of the material on advertising dealing with "instinctive appeals." This reflects, however, upon his previous reading rather than upon Dr. Snow's book.

Should the economist read through this book, one rather fears that from time to time he would say, "They call this psychology? If it is, I'm a psychologist and not an economist." And I, for one, as a psychologist, would not feel justified to argue with him on more than a fourth of the pages. The book would have been more accurately named "Psychology and Common Sense in Business Relations," but this, of course, does not militate against the worth of the book. Rather does it reflect the present somewhat unfortunate status of psychology—our definite psychological knowledge of business relations is limited and scattering. Dr. Snow by research is making this less limited and less scattered, but in presenting a fairly systematic outline in book form it has been necessary for him to use wisdom where information failed or was missing. The present book has undeniably profited by the large admixture of psychology which Dr. Snow's experience has made it possible for him to put into the subjects treated.

The reviewer's opinion is that most need exists for a book on "Psychology in Business Relations" which will show the reader how psychological insight into business matters is gained by psychological experimentation. The field will benefit most by the increase of those who know about the research methods and the reader will benefit most by learning these methods which have been found of immense value in many industrial and business applications. In the present status of business psychology or industrial psychology the methods rather than the sum total of findings are of most use to the individual industrialist.

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