

It would be possible to relate many other instances and examples of the results of good and bad contact on the part of the purchasing agent and their far-reaching results. It is probably necessary, however, to prove the point a fact by using the preceding supposition only, for it should not fail to draw to the memory of most anyone in contact with the ins and outs of the manufacturing game, personal experiences that will parallel it in actual happening.

It is, therefore a fact that the impression made on the outside world by the purchasing agent is indirectly as far-reaching in its effect on company's welfare as that created and maintained by the salesman directly; and further, that this impression is as important a subject for control on the part of the manager as is his desire to buy to good prices and timely deliveries. There was a time; and that not so very long ago, when the conditions that governed the daily running of a purchasing department were far different from what they are today. Events followed each other in a more sedate fashion. There was not the multitude of different makes and qualities of the same material on the market. One source for a given thing could be decided on and then stayed with. The purchase time requirements were in favor of the agent and allowed him to deliberately investigate all the conditions. Firms produced their work so that from year to year it did not vary from one or possibly two uniform qualities. No great changes in practice were necessary in the shop.

Machinery and all the changes it has forced by way of competition in production was not a governing factor. Tools were by the same token limited in their scope and range. The manufacturer who had the best craftsmen had an established business and a set round of customers. The purchasing agent had time to keep his records up to date and to talk to the comparatively few salesmen who came around in the week to see how things were going, and to pass the time of day. There was one accepted steel and one best lathe which he could buy and one wagon to deliver his goods to the railroad station.

And then one day he found that there was another steel company that promised to do better for him than the old one, and another company started production of machine tools in competition with the original mill. A man showed up who had better tool bits to use in the lathe rest, which could take a deeper cut, and three or four outfits could replace the old style methods in the different departments. There was a chap who could sell belting that was not made of leather, and a special

machinery builder would cut the run of the operation in half; and so it gradually grew with ever-increasing speed until there came the day that the agent found he was literally swamped. Certain of the machines he had bought broke down from lack of correct design; several of the new sources of material failed of timely delivery; his own concern had taken on some side lines which necessitated his finding and securing a number of items of material he had never heard of before. He was given assistants and still had to work at night; and while he hated, as any man who was proud of his job would, to acknowledge defeat, he was forced to the conclusion that things had come to such a pass as to make it physically and mentally impossible to do justice to his job unless he could become superhuman and master a half dozen professions besides that of buying overnight.

Knowing these things and realizing the impossibility of knowing for himself all of the things that had to be known to keep things going to the best advantage for his company, he cast about for ways and means to relieve the situation. He started by analyzing the standing conditions. He set down the things he had to know to hold down his own work as it had been, items in his profession that had always been his and that should rightfully stay under his direct control from the very nature of his training. These things listed somewhat as follows:

All initial contact with outside salesmen.

The actual contracting for anything and everything that was to be bought.

The price-setting based on adequate information.

The terms of delivery and payment.

The search for and location of adequate numbers of reputable companies for any given material need.

The final control of the purchasing department contact policies with incoming salesmen.

He studied these items and then listed those things which he had not named and that it would be impossible for him to cover in person for reasons that were apparent and not capable of alteration. He realized that they were of equal importance to his success and saw that he could name a very long list, but he took care to put down only the ones that would be necessary to the start of any change in previous practice. They were as follows:

Intelligent interview with salesman who represented highly specialized or technical lines, where his lack of training on mechanical lines kept him from being able to accurately judge their value even after he had satisfied

himself as to the standing and reputation of that salesman's company.

Means and ability to conduct and follow the results of tests in order to do justice to the salesman submitting the trial material and to know without the chance of error the true merit of that material in its relation to possible savings to his company.

A definite knowledge of the time service of a given material and the recording of information as to the causes for the final failure, in order to be able to determine whether the grade and attendant price of that material was being maintained too high or too low.

Means to check the actual use by the plant of materials purchased for a specific purpose, and a guard on the definite way that material should be used in order that the company might get the benefit of the possible savings for which he has spent their money, instead of putting their dollars on some stock shelf to waste away in idleness.

Specialized consultation of subjects out of his range and specialized assistance to secure for his company the latest and best both by way of materials and service, things he could not find himself because he had no way of knowing where to look or what to look for.

He studied this list for a considerable time and knew that if he could find the way to fulfill these conditions and work them to stay in harmony with his first list that he would once more not only have his department working at top efficiency, but would be able to keep it there.

He appreciated that it would be necessary to solve this problem by obtaining assistance from one or the other of the plant departments outside of his own, and whoever he should pick would have to be able to meet all points that were beyond his direct capacity.

First, this assistance must come provided with the necessary technical knowledge.

Second, there must be involved no chance of any element entering in that would judge trials of materials on other than actual service rendered as against the dollar spent.

Third, whoever was to give conclusively the right answers must not be tied down to or influenced by local conditions in any given part of the plant, but must have the free swing of the entire layout from receiving to shipping.

Fourth, there must be included the power of supervision over the actual application of any material bought for a specific purpose, to guard against its incorrect use or its failure to be employed at all.

Consideration of the subject pointed to one department as being in possession of ability and capacity to meet the requirements to the best advantage. The engineer through his technical training is able to cope advantageously with mechanical and technical questions, if not directly, then through reliable sources of information he has located and holds in readiness.

He is interested in any material only on the basis of the use he can receive from it, for his very existence depends on that service.

He is responsible for production indirectly and as a whole, and is not tied down or influenced by conditions in one department that could not be applied to any of the others.

He is held responsible for the amount of money charged against him in a month as against the percentage it shows of the production dollar, and is therefore careful not to put more into any one project than it can economically bear.

Due to the fact that he is more or less of a free lance in the entire plant, appearing wherever there is trouble, he is fitted to see operations as a whole, and he is invested in most plants with the power of control in the use of materials and equipment.

In short, the engineer is the logical man to work hand in hand with the purchasing agent, and it is possible to a very large extent to measure the success of either one of the two departments in direct relation to the degree of this closeness.

Many firms and most purchasing agents have realized this point for some time, but there are some few who have not found it out and are laboring hard as a result. There are even some of both purchasing agents and engineers who refuse to appreciate the value of each to the other, for one reason or another, and wonder why it is that their standing with the outside world is so low or that they are rated as so relatively unimportant when it comes to decisions on company policy.

It is generally conceded to be true that half the battle to gain a point has been attained when any individual or group has arrived at a knowledge of the governing facts to the elimination of ungrounded opinions, and have so regulated them that there only remains the following of a definite, laid-out policy. These facts are often hard to see from the very reason that they are such every-day happenings that they are more or less accepted as being part of things and not subject to change.

Here is the point where the efficiency man comes in, and is the reason why he can usually demand such large