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DON'T ENGAGE A CONSULTANT

By N. H. ATHREYA, MA, FCWA, MBIM

*Don't engage a consultant, that is, if.....
..... you think he is a superman.*

You will be disillusioned. He is like any one of your good executives. Only, he can and he does give *all* his time to *one* of your non-recurring problems unlike your own executive whose limited time is claimed by all the routine problems in your organisation.

..... you have a man in your organisation who can handle the job for you.

It is likely you have in your company a man who has the ability and the time. If, after thorough investigation, you find you have some good reason to have an outside consultant, please explain it to the personnel who have qualifications similar to his. People who see a highly paid consultant doing the same sort of work that they are doing, for no apparent reason, can easily lose confidence in themselves and in the leadership of the company.

..... you have not assured yourself that the man who will work on your problem is equipped, mature, balanced, tactful and reputed.

Don't pay first class fees to third class men — your employee public won't pardon you.

..... you cannot care to introduce the consultant to your organisation suitably.

Give him a clear idea of the policies and practices of the company. Tell the people concerned the reasons for hiring him. In addition to outlining the specific problem with which he has to deal, make clear the more general reasons too viz. the value of his objectivity toward the company and its problems; his ability to concentrate all his efforts on one particular problem, without the distraction of administrative duties. More important, emphasise the fact that the presence of the consultant in the company does not imply criticism of the officers or supervisors.

..... you wish to let him loose on your organisation and hope all will be well by the appointed day.

Choosing him is certainly important but using him is more important. If you don't have the mind or the time or the men to work with him on the project, you are plain wasting your money. His role is advisory. He can help you get things done; he can't do things himself.

..... you have made up your mind what your problem is and what the solution should be.

A reputed consultant will like to find out for himself what the basic problem is and not go by pre-conceived notions, his or others. He cannot afford to.

..... you want a report from him which will justify your throwing men out.

Even otherwise, his job is tough. The consultant is industry's friend — he is not a foe of any of the partners of industry: management, labour, customer or government. In fact, a reputed consultant will insist that you give a categorical assurance to your employees that none will lose his job as a result of his recommendations for improvement. He does want to save you money and he can in many other ways. Besides, he wants to save you trouble, presently and in the future too.

..... you think he can work miracles.

He cannot. He cannot bring order out of chaos overnight. Before he comes out with suggestions to help you, he has to do hard work. If the company's disease is of a chronic type, it will take him a long, long time to set it right. If he says he has some magic pills with him, please don't believe him.

..... you think of him as a last resort.

The "M.D.'s of industry" can certainly attempt to cure cases that are desperate ones. Forward looking management should use him for a better purpose. It should get into the practice of calling him even while it is well. He can help you stay healthy—he can save you from the many ills industry is heir to. As one American Executive expressed it, "Such business doctors are retained principally by companies in sound health. Unlike the Chinese, we would rather pay them to keep us well than to come in and bury the corpse."

..... you have already one consultant working on the same problem.

It is not fair to him, or to you or to the new consultant. A good consultant will

not agree to work under such conditions: much less will he offer to replace the other man. He is a professional and he has a rigid code of ethics* to adhere to.

..... you want to squander money.

There are other ways. Don't call him if you think it is a fashion to call a consultant. YOU may not expect anything from him but the PUBLIC does. Won't it be unfair to damn the man and his profession, even unconsciously?

* The code recommended code of ethics by the ACME reads:

THE CODE RECOMMENDED

Every reputable consultant is pledged to observe and maintain these ethical practices:

1. In presenting our qualifications for carrying out an assignment, we will make representations and employ means that conform to the highest professional standards.
2. We will accept engagements that we are qualified to undertake and will assign to a client's work personnel fitted to give effective services in solving problems involved.
3. We will regard as confidential all information concerning the business and affairs of a client coming to us in the course of our professional engagement.
4. We will maintain an objective and unbiased attitude and will always be governed by the best interests of the client.
5. We will endeavour so to serve our clients that our work will bring about permanent benefits. In striving for these results we will supply the client's employees with information as to the principles applied and the techniques adopted in such a manner that improvements suggested may be most effectively administered by them after completion of our assignment.
6. We will be guided in our work by the increasingly preponderant importance of

human relations and accordingly so formulate our recommendations and pave the way for their introduction that the co-operation of all employees substantially affected may be reasonably expected.

7. We will maintain an impartial attitude towards the work of our professional colleagues and will refrain from making comments, either solicited or unsolicited, which will be detrimental to the standing of our profession.

8. We will charge reasonable fees or rates for service, appropriate to the character of the work and preferably agreed upon in advance of an engagement.

9. We will not accept fees, commissions, or any other valuable considerations from organizations the use of whose equipment, supplies or services we may recommend to our clients.

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