

Management Ideas



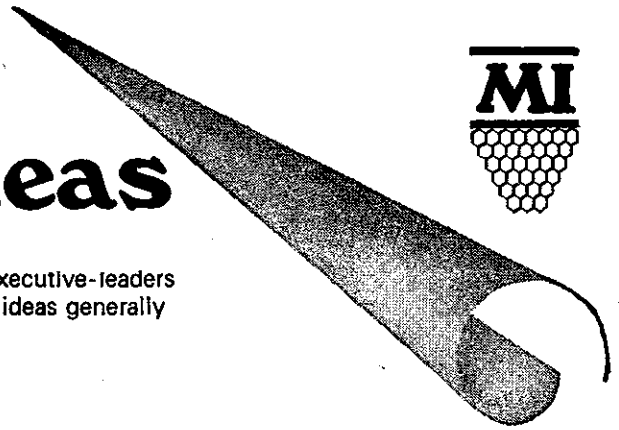
FOR STILL BETTER

RESULTS

RELATIONS

REPUTATION

a monthly newsletter to key executive-leaders
on practices, possibilities and ideas generally
for stepped up performance
edited by
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on problem-solving and creative ideas



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3158 PREVENT STRESS BUILDING UP: It's a well-known fact that little things are the biggest stress makers. Not the crises of life, but the countless hassles of your day are what add up to stress.

Relieving it can be done by little things as well. For a better mood at the end of the day, and less strain on your heart, make a conscious effort to fight stress every day. Small steps that add up to wore energy include:

- * Take time to stretch. Raise your arms high, then stretch to the right and to the left.
- * Take a walk at lunch time. Climb the stairs, or do something else that causes deep, regular breathing.
- * Laughing breaks stress. Save the comics for break time, or chat with a humorous person.
- * Dream up a mini vacation. When you're really "up tight", take a few minutes to relax in the warm sand of a tropical beach, or swim in refreshing waters. Feel the warmth of the sun your mind creates.
- * Hug people. If you can't hug anyone at work, be sure to hug your family, your pets, old friends when you see them.
- * Play a game. Call up a computer game during break, do a crossword puzzle, or play something else.
- * Breathe deeply in through the nose and out through the mouth. Do it six or seven times.

3159 BRITISH WAY? Scientific Management? Or..... WE QUOTED A PASSAGE FROM A BRITISH BOOK in the last issue (Nov.1989). THE AUTHOR COMMENTS THAT IT IS MAINLY THE "BRITISH" COMPANIES WITH AMERICAN CONNECTIONS THAT GO FOR QUALITY IN BIG WAY. HE ASKS WHY AND ANSWERS. SINCE WE IN INDIA HAVE ACQUIRED AND RETAINED SOME OF THE WORST BRITISH TRADITIONS - THE BRITISH HAVE SOME VERY FINE TRADITIONS WITHOUT DOUBT - THE DESCRIPTION APPLIES TO US IN GOOD PART:

"There seems to be a transatlantic willingness on the part of these organisations to look closely at themselves and their performance and to acknowledge that, whilst they are already operating effectively, there is still room for improvement; and that smarter quality control is the key to achieving it. They examine themselves and their affairs with a critical detachment and honesty. They search out their own defects, then actively strive to remedy them. This process of unembarrassed self-criticism, followed by enthusiastic self improvement, seems to be beyond the scope of many of our all-British organisations. Why should this be so? Why is the motivation to do things better found more often in American-owned British subsidiaries than in the fully home-grown company? What factors are at work preventing us British from aspiring to do better through self-help? The reasons are probably many and varied and complex, but some might have to do with our history and our traditions.

As a nation of manufacturers, with a trading deficit in manufactured goods for the first time in more than two hundred years, we seem to prefer looking into the certainties of our past rather than facing our future. As we have grown too fond of warming our hands at yesterday's camp fires, nostalgia has become a growth business.

We seem to be developing an unhealthy obsession with the contemplation of the glories of our past. Our past, of course, though it had its many moments of grandiosity, could hardly be described with clinical accuracy as a chronicle of all that is glorious. Any economic system founded upon plantation slavery overseas and factory serfdom at home could hardly lay claim to a deal of glory. Opportunism, yes. Greed, for sure. Pagentry, of course. But glory?

Over the centuries we became adept at the tricky art of dipping our bread into other people's gravy; this phenomenon was called 'imperialism'. In those days we also happened to be one of the most inventive and self-confident nations in the world; inventive we still are, perhaps, though nowadays we allow others to exploit our inventions; self-confident we no longer seem to be. Once upon a time we were top dog; but, since we started the Industrial Revolution and grew into the world's pre-eminent manufacturing power, an insidious process of decay has been taking place. A canker has been gnawing at our roots.

This canker is called, for want of a better term, 'gentrification'. This spiritual affliction manifests itself as the overweening desire to be looked upon as a 'gentleman'. It has to do with that enduring structure of shadows and delusions which comprises the British Class System. We British, being British and therefore unconsciously and irredeemably steeped in the wormwood liquor of class, love to despise each other for it--so much so that an Irish playwright was prompted to observe 'no sooner does one Englishman open his mouth than another despises him'. This peculiarly English (no longer British--the Scots

and the Welsh and the Irish are apparently impervious to this kind of mental aberration) disease shows itself as an irrational yearning to be thought of as being better than you secretly believe yourself to be. It is, of course, a delusion; a deeply-entrenched conviction of personal social inferiority which forever clamours for assurance that it is not really so. All in all, it is a strange state of mind; it has had profound international repercussions, including the capitulation of Singapore, and its sour fruits have affected some of our industrialists and hence much of our industry.

It is because of this hierarchical system of graded social insult that no sooner has a tycoon amassed a few million pounds than he becomes ashamed of having earned his money through the dirty business of manufacturing. So, lured by the seductive siren of social acceptance, he builds a mansion in a park and emulates a life-style appropriate to higher rank. He sends his offspring to expensive schools where they are taught to build themselves into monuments to their own superiority. This is all quite laughable, or it would be if it were not for the fact that money which might have been fruitfully re-invested in the growing business for the common good has been syphoned off in the trivial pursuit of social vanity. The British class system has a lot to answer for.

This phenomenon, this notion of upward social mobility, is still alive and well and with us. It flourishes like a rank weed throughout the land. It still commands the attention of industrial managers who should be deploying their efforts on more worthwhile objectives. Its industrial counterpart--a process of 'prissification' exerts its own stultifying influence with our manufacturing organisations. Thus an organisation, British, ostensibly created for the purpose of collectively pursuing profit by servicing the needs of a market more effectively than its competitors are able to do, atrophies into something different. In losing its sense of its true founding purpose it becomes many strange things: it becomes a trading post for grievances. Managers fight each other in sly guerilla warfare and play 'office politics', instead of joining together to form invincible teams to overcome the competition. Paranoia and introspection prevail.

It becomes a forcing house for clones. People seeking promotion (and eventual gentrification through sustained prissification) consciously model themselves on whatever they perceive to be the approved conventional cardboard cutout. So they become less a real person and more an acceptance-seeking stereotype.

It becomes a given wisdom. Certain opinions about certain topics become enshrined as cornerstones of corporate faith. Thus the members of the organisation, in their endless search for social approval as a substitute for genuine achievement, embrace the received wisdom uncritically. In doing so they place themselves, without realising it, just one short moral step away from the dreadful gates of Auschwitz, whose executives also carried out the policies of an approving higher authority in unquestioning obedience.

It becomes a builder's yard for the construction of reputations. Mere frantic activity finds greater approval than quiet accomplishment, so that the socially ambitious try to metamorphose themselves and natural plodders strive to transform their serviceable legs into brilliant wings in order that they may pass themselves off as those

organisational butterflies called 'high flyers'.

All these things, and more, and worse, might happen to an organisation once it has lost its sense of true purpose: perhaps because its purpose is so mundane; perhaps because making money in industry by being good at what you do is so boring, and problems are much more interesting than solutions. Maybe the business and the product are so commonplace that they are unable to satisfy an employee's desire to be 'somebody'. What could be more pedestrian, say, than doing nothing all day except converting tinplate into cans?

Yet what could be more exhilarating than doing it better than it has ever been done before and better than anybody else in the world?

How, then, does Britain rate on quality? Without the driving force of foreign parentage or foreign influence it seems to stand with one collective foot in a rosy past that never really was and with the other, private, foot on the rung of a social ladder that leads upwards to a cloud-cockoo-land whose only reward is disappointment because it exists nowhere except in the strangely deluded minds of its believers. The remedy to all this is a dose of hard realism. A most potent ingredient of this medicine is the philosophy of total quality management, because it is about much more than the application of statistical method to process and product problems. It has to do with bringing cultural change into the organisation. It is concerned with the restoration of wholeness to work shattered into fragments by the advent of Scientific Management."

THE ANSWER? IT IS NOT DIFFICULT TO FIND THE ANSWER. WHAT IS DIFFICULT IS TO LIVE THAT ANSWER - WALK THE TALK AS THEY SAY IN THE INITIAL STAGES. ONCE WE GET INTO THE STRIDE, NOTHING CAN STOP US FROM GOING FURTHER AND FASTER.

3160 KEEPING MINIMUM-WAGE WORKERS MOTIVATED: According to Marilyn Moats Kennedy author of "Kennedy's Career Strategist", there are six techniques for giving your low-on-the-totem-pole workers greater control over their jobs in order to boost spirits and job loyalty:

* **Lay it on the line.** Tell applicants for minimum-wage jobs (1) that they often will have to deal with difficult customers, (2) that management is aware of the stress this involves, (3) that learning to deal with difficult people can boost their career in the long term and (4) that there never is an excuse for being rude or inconsiderate to customers or clients, even when they deserve it.

* **Teach troubleshooting.** Show your new hires how to use calming phrases (rather than angry retorts) when dealing with rude or peevish customers. Assemble the best phrases in a pamphlet entitled "What to say when...." and make it required reading, even required memorizing.

* **Assign A buddy.** Never put a new person on the firing line to learn by doing. Assign your best "public relations" person to help newcomers. Everyone will benefit because the new hires will come up to speed more quickly, which means they will take on a full workload sooner. Proper training is essential when the job entails giving information. Misinformation is worse than no information.

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* **Get to the real issue.** Works is a role people assume, not an extension of personality. Make it clear that the patients who are abusive to an admitting clerk in the emergency room don't dislike the employee personally. They're abusing the position. Your staff should feel confident that this treatment is not a result of their doing anything wrong.

* **Run (Private) contests for "rudest patient/client/customer of the month."** Lighten the load by giving a prize for the most outrageous story. Encourage people to tell "Can you top this?" anecdotes. One director of admissions at a hospital has kept a large staff working happily for several years, with minimum turnover, by organizing quarterly games of charades during the lunch break. Each clerk gets to act out her worst scene. It reduces the stress, and when it's kept strictly among the staff, it helps morale. Employees think, "We're all in this together".

* **Provide a sounding board.** It's better for the staff to bring their hurt feelings and outrageous stories to you for sympathy than to circulate their discontent outside the organization. Always be available to the walking wounded.

3161 HARDHAT FACTS: The hardhat is one of the most important pieces of protective equipment worn by people in industry. Thousands of people have been saved from serious injury by this durable headgear.

The Industrial Safety Equipment Association reminds us that we have to take good care of the hardhat if it is to protect the way it should. It recommends that we:

- Keep it clean. Dirt can hide small cracks. When even a hairline crack appears in a hardhat, it should be replaced.
- Check the suspension system. It can become damaged and worn. Look for cracking, torn adjustment slots, fraying material, and other signs of wear, especially at the suspension lugs.
- The suspensions should be replaced twice a year or whenever they are damaged.
- Nothing should ever be placed between the suspension and the inside of the hat. Gloves or cigarettes, for example, take up space that should be used for absorbing shock.
- Helmets should never be altered. Drilling holes to attach a decoration, for example, destroys the helmet's protective properties. Symbols or numbers may be applied as decals or marking tape.
- Never paint the helmet. Solvents in the paint can make the helmet brittle and more susceptible to cracks.

3162 LAUGHING MATTER?

Have you noticed that the income tax people are kinder? For example, I just got a notice from them saying, "Please drop in at your earliest convenience this afternoon."

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