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PRODUCTIVITY IN THE OFFICE

Some of us may imagine that Productivity applies only to the factory. That is quite wrong. To J. Hume, Controller and Secretary, we are indebted for this timely contribution on how staff personnel can help in the drive for greater Productivity.

Most people have the impression that productivity and the necessity to increase productivity applies only to a manufacturing facility using machinery, but it is just as important to increase the productivity of clerical and administration functions. Clerical and ancillary costs are a considerable part of the overheads of all businesses and require continual review to ensure remaining competition.

During the past ten years there has been a steady increase in the practical applications of work study principles to the office, but a lot remains to be done. There is a growing appreciation to the need for some firm stand to be taken against the continual growth of clerical functions.

Greater Efficiency

It is a thought-provoking observation that managements supply modern offices and the latest types of desks and office appliances, but take relatively little interest in the productivity of the employee. In fact, the cost of the employee is probably 90 per cent. of the work centre comprising a desk, office space for the desk, heating and lighting of that desk and the employee himself. This pattern is true of most offices and employees are very often left to do the job as they think it should be done, but very rarely is the job procedure laid down in such a manner that the maximum efficiency and productivity is obtained from the clerical effort expended in the job. Where such conditions exist there is a good basis for the application of methods for increasing the office productivity and this increase might be accomplished by carrying out the following programme :

1. Making job analyses of all clerical and supervisory positions.
2. Determining and setting performance standards for the work involved.
3. Improving job work methods and procedures.
4. Training office workers in specific knowledges, skills and attitudes.
5. Establishing and applying work incentives.
6. Improving supervision at all levels.



J. HUME

The implementation of such a programme does not require the appointment of individuals responsible only for improving these functions but, in fact, this programme can be carried out as part of the routine work.

Reducing Paper Work

The requirements for office work will never be eliminated, but it must be controlled. Much of the cost of the office services in our company arises from the number of reports which are issued and each person can help in this elimination of office work by examining very closely each report which he receives and advising whether it is necessary. It is not sufficient to consider it necessary because it was received last month; the question should be asked, "What action do I take when I receive this report?" If the answer is "File it", you should immediately tell the originator that the report is not required. Similarly, originators of all reports should, at least once a year, examine whether the report is necessary or whether it could be improved.

CHARLIE PICKSTON RETIRES.—Last month C. A. Pickston retired after 37 years on the engineering side of the Rubber industry. When he joined us in 1956 as Asst. Project Engineer in our £3 million modernisation programme, he had been with Avon Rubber for 30 years, latterly their Works Engineer. For a time he was Chief Engineer at Castle Mills.



Charlie Pickston had a wide circle of friends at Castle Mills, very evident by the handsome gift of Edinburgh crystal and trolley which he received as a retirement gift.

Centre—C. A. Pickston with, on his left, D. F. Vallis, Works Director, who made the presentation.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

PRODUCTION CONTROL is the means by which we endeavour to ensure that sufficient of the right materials are available at the right time and in the right place.

When we have a meal prepared at home all these requirements must be met. The food must be what we will enjoy, when we are hungry and in a place we find congenial for eating.

To meet these requirements needs liaison between the cook and the diner, likewise in the factory between the producer and the consumer.

TREDAIRE WAS CHOSEN

In a decor of exemplary taste, a feature of Mecca's new Empire Ballroom in London's Leicester Square is the beautiful carpeting, made even more luxurious by the use of over Tredaire carpet underlay. Over 1500 square yards of this distinctive willow green rubber underlay cushions every footstep on the carpeted balcony, the ballroom surround, bar and in the ladies' boudoirs.

Incidentally in a scheme of renovation at the Orchid Ballroom, Purley, one of the largest in Mecca's chain of dance halls, some 750 square yards of willow green Tredaire were used to give that extra touch of luxury to the carpeting and add appreciably to its years of wear.

In our company, the cost of the Control Division as a percentage of total company salaries has been decreasing in the past four years. In 1959 Control Division cost was 19.1 per cent. of the company total, but this has now been reduced to 15 per cent. The number of people employed has decreased by 17 per cent by means of continual analysis of the paper work, the reports and the other office duties.

In the present age of keen competition it is essential that each company examines its clerical functions continuously and that the necessary action is taken to reduce this part of a company's overhead costs.