

management seminar. The seminar consisted of twelve sessions. One of the highlights of each meeting was a fifteen-minute discussion by one of the executives on the topic "How I solved my most pressing management problem."

At the ninth session, the executive whose turn it was, a vice president of a large milk-processing company, did something different. Instead of telling how he had solved his problem, he announced his topic as "Needed: Help on solving my most pressing management problem." He quickly outlined his problem and then asked the group for ideas on solving it. To be sure he got a record of each idea suggested, he had a stenographer in the room taking down everything that was said.

Later I talked with this man and complimented him on his unique approach. His comment was "There are some very sharp men in this group. I just figured I'd harvest some ideas. There's a good possibility something someone said during that session may give me the clue I need to solve the problem."

Note: this executive presented his problem, then *listened*. In so doing, he got some decision-making raw material, and, as a side benefit, the other executives in the audience enjoyed the discussion because it gave them the opportunity to take part.

Successful businesses invest large sums in consumer research. They ask people about the taste, quality, size, and appearance of a product. Listening to people provides definite ideas for making the product more salable. It also suggests to the manufacturer what he should tell consumers about the product in his advertising. The procedure for developing successful products is to get as much opinion as you can, listen to the people who will buy the product, and then design the product and its promotion to please these people.