

procedure and other documents, charts, summaries, etc., to provide quick reference in your work.

To complex questions, our first reaction is often uncertain and confused. This is a good sign if the question is really new to us and difficult, for we often jump to the wrong conclusion unless we keep an open mind on a question until we have looked all round it and sized it up. When the time for decision comes, our minds will be fresher and our judgment sounder for our initial hesitation and doubts.

The Need for Decisiveness

The important thing is to be decisive at the right time. But decisive we must be. Some men seize as eagerly on excuses for postponing action as other men grasp opportunities for making decisions. The favourite pretext for indecisiveness is the need for mature deliberation, but we find that in practice indecisive men are less apt to think things over seriously than others.

So after taking up your tasks in the order of their importance and thinking them over fully, make up your mind promptly and decisively. Sometimes your study of a question will disclose certain matters of policy that should be decided first by someone higher up. State these and obtain a decision, then suggest a course of action on the matter you are concerned with. Add a draft, if you think a letter or other communication is called for. Always take the action along as far as you can towards a final conclusion. Your department is organised into branches, divisions, sections, etc., through which runs a power relationship, the line of authority, according to which each matter should be dealt with to the full at the lowest level so that only matters of the highest importance are dealt with at the highest levels. It is your duty, therefore, to make the case as clear as possible for the next senior officer.

Do not be put out too much if your recommendation is not accepted or if your drafts are altered. If your chief knows the elements of control and leadership, he will not alter your drafts without good reason, and when he does, he will usually indicate the reasons. These will help you next time. And although your recommendation may not be accepted, you will have clarified his mind and helped in the decision.

Improving Work Methods

Again if your chief has good sense, and you go about it the right way, he will appreciate any suggestions that may occur to you on work methods—on what or why or where or when or how your work, or work in the office generally, should be done. Of course, if you are wise you will first make quite sure that you really understand the job, and the reasons behind any of its tasks, before suggesting improvements.

The important thing is, having decided on the various operations involved in present methods, to look at them again and see whether some of them can be cut out or modified, *Simplify, standardise and co-ordinate* wherever possible. Especially in large repetitive jobs this can prevent congestion, lack of balance, inefficient duplication and overlapping of duties.