

Management Education and Training

A RETAIL SOCIETY VIEW

by

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In a large Society, with hundreds of management jobs in a wide range of departments, trading and non-trading, the need for an effective system of planning for management succession is self-evident. On average, there are 80-90 "first-time" management appointments each year, the majority in the Food Trades division but with substantial numbers in Non-Foods and Dairy; the specialist trading departments, service departments and offices all have their share of new management appointments and they are included in plans to ensure acceptable standards of management succession.

Looking back, it is easy to recall the Food Trades promotion system of "First-hands on the Short-list", with literally scores of tried and tested candidates able and willing to do a good job of management in the typical grocery branch of that time. One might well echo the tune, if not the words, of that rather plaintive chant "Where have all the First-hands gone?".

Junior Management Training

However, for a variety of reasons only too familiar in most Societies, the whole scene has changed; the system of recruiting juniors who should advance to management through trade studies and practical experience still provides a valuable nucleus of potential managers but of recent years

the supply has been less than the demand and currently makes only a small contribution to the aggregate need. Our Junior Management training scheme for 16-17 year old entrants is open to those having a suitable standard of education; a written test is given during interviews at Head Office or Regional Office and those engaged are enrolled for appropriate courses at local colleges. New plans are in hand for the 1978/79 session whereby Food Trades aspirants will attend a specially arranged Block-release course at the College for the Distributive Trades, leading to the College Certificate in Supermarket Retailing; this will be supplemented later by internal training courses dealing with management responsibilities and procedures. Junior trainees from other departments will enrol for the new Business Education Council courses, although the concern which has been expressed elsewhere about entry qualifications for the National awards may be confirmed by lack of continuity in relevant studies. "On-job" training is based on broad programmes of supervised practical experience in one or more sections, with regular contacts by Staff Training personnel; it is clear that "wastage" of trainees in all departments can be reduced if their practical training follows an undisturbed pattern . . . but this is not easy amidst the "alarms and excursions" of modern retailing!

Management Potential in Adult Staff

Adult staff are constantly reviewed to find those with potential for management but in some areas the number available for training falls short of management requirements; this is sometimes due to lack of motivation, sometimes to anxiety about costly travelling when mobility is required but more often it is due to the substantial proportion of "part-timers" who cannot be brought into planning of this kind. However, we use every possible resource of advertising and publicity, including press advertisements to attract additional recruits for management training and

without causing anxiety about local wages costs! Arrangements are made for their further education by studies at colleges or by correspondence courses organised by the Education Department of the Co-operative Union; they are also expected to become "local staff trainers" with recognised qualifications in Instructional Techniques and they gain useful experience in this rôle as their own training progresses.

Dairy and Catering Departments

The Society's Dairy Department has over 2,000 staff employed in processing dairies and distributive depots. There is a specialist instructor and, on the whole, education and training for management succession has proved adequate; there is some flexibility in the progression of trainees from distributive to processing functions, with basic trade education at the College for the Distributive Trades supplemented by seminars and courses conducted by the National Dairymen's Association and the Milk Marketing Board. Internal training courses have recently included instruction in the use of computer terminals in distribution depots and a number of training schemes are being planned for sales development and industrial relations.

It is not feasible to detail the arrangements for management education and training in all departments of the Society but reference must be made to the Catering Department with its hotel, restaurant and banqueting facilities, industrial canteens and cafeterias. This department has a specialist instructor and trainee managers are normally recruited with City and Guilds qualifications; their further training includes internal courses and attendances at short courses conducted by the Hotel and Catering Industry Training Board.

The nature of a retail Society calls for something more than technical competence in local management although

these skills are fully tested in current economic conditions; there must also be awareness and understanding of the rôle of Co-operative organisation and its distinctive features. This aspect of management education often poses a challenge and it is hoped that we have achieved some success in pointing out to our managers the motives and objectives of Co-operation in practice.