**THE ISSUE:**

DOES BUSINESS DEMAND A TEAM EFFORT?

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**A necessary chain of command insuring organizational efficiency by sacrificing individual creativity and independent action.**

---James Hill, Harvard University

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Dear Mr. Hill:

If, by this statement, you imply that business demands a team effort, you are right. The days of the solitary worker are over. There are only a handful of endeavors—basic research, for example, or the arts—where the individual can go most of the way alone. Eventually, even this man needs other men to help get his efforts to the public. An engineer team to extend his discovery into practical channels. A publisher for his book. An orchestra for his symphony.

Our society is a system composed of a great variety of sub-systems. College, neighborhood, business, profession, social, and leisure activities all fall into one or more of these sub-systems. Each system needs some degree of structure and organization if it is to function and not collapse. This structure, then, is your "necessary chain of command."

It is obvious, however, that chains of command, per se, do not create organizational efficiency. They can lead to bureaucratic bungling and red tape. Ask anyone who has encountered some of the rules, regulations, and procedures of some government agencies. Recognizing the problem of over-organization, most companies have spent considerable time and effort studying systems and trying to build in as much flexibility and fluidity as possible. As a general rule, the bigger the company, the more it is concerned with this problem.

Today, many businesses function with many different chains of command—a few stretch all the way to the top. And, if you look at a company's organization chart you'll usually find a number of horizontal decision-making lines linking the different departments and divisions that function as part of the corporate team.

Think what would happen if I had to pass on every important decision made at Motorola—I'd be swamped. The bulk of the company's decision-making occurs at other levels. That's what executives are for—to make decisions and to assume the basic responsibility for those decisions.

At Motorola, we've established smaller, decentralized, highly autonomous units. One result has been to foster and increase individual responsibility and participation. With a few exceptions, top management sees its job as providing the framework for decision-making—pointing the particular direction and letting others decide how best to get there.

This type of organization is not a secret known only to Motorola. Most modern companies have fit into a traditional, pyramid-like organizational structure.

Interestingly, this kind of flexible, team-oriented approach to organization structure is almost tailor-made for a younger executive. It provides a dynamic framework for him to function side by side with older, more seasoned men and, at the same time, gives him an opportunity to acquire basic on-the-job experience. I've participated in a great many conferences that have included the exciting kind of give-and-take discussions that often occur between the somewhat impatient young executive and the slightly set-in-his-ways older man. The result is generally a valuable synthesis of ideas that beneficially link the present with the future.

In his new job, the young man will need every ounce of "individual creativity and independent action" he can muster. Don't forget, he'll be up against some pretty stiff competition from his colleagues. He'll also discover that while corporate life is competitive, it is also cooperative. This is not as paradoxical as it sounds. People in a business are there to achieve a common objective and this can only be done when they work together. Obviously, the individual competes for attention, recognition, and the rewards of promotion. But even in this atmosphere he finds that he cannot operate without cooperating—even with his competition.

This kind of competition is good. It brings out the best in a man. Prompts him to devote that extra measure of energy or study to make him just a little better than the man next to him; able to help just a little bit more than the others who are helping the organization. These are steps he must take on his own initiative.

It's not always easy—but, in my opinion, that's where the challenge lies; that's what puts the spring in your step. At times, an individual will have to stand up to out-dated policies and managers who show no foresight. Point out what's wrong and, more importantly, show why. This is an important thing—it's essential for the growth of the individual and the corporation.

When a man has this attitude about his career, his age is unimportant. He'll be recognized where he's 24 or 64.

Robert W. Galvin
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