A Businessman Answers These Two Student Questions

1. Why are there so few management training programs open to students?

2. What does business really do to encourage creativity?

Dear Mr. Hill:

The questions in the heading above seemed to me to be two of the basic concerns of your last letter. They are interrelated. Let's take them in order:

1. Management training programs. At one extreme, there are companies with no planned training programs at all. These firms hire men principally for specific functions for which previous experience has fitted them. In doing these jobs, they receive on-the-job training in the normal course of business.

At the other extreme are companies which have such elaborate and lengthy programs that one of the other students writing these open letters with me feels: "...they drag on for...even years."

Most companies fall between these two poles—and the number of corporate training programs has doubled in the last ten years. The training goal is to help a student develop his talents best in the shortest time. Most progressive companies continue this training through all levels of employment. The day a businessman stops learning is the day he may stop being a successful businessman.

An increasing number of company training programs do include young men who are not yet regular or full-time employees. Summer jobs in business might once have been seen by a student chiefly as a way to make some money and by a company chiefly as a way to obtain temporary "fill-in" help to replace vacationing employees. Not today. Summer training programs at AT&T, First National City Bank, Mobil Oil, and Olin Mathieson, for example, provide students with well-defined and meaningful jobs, accomplish definite objectives for the companies, and give the student a good taste of what the company and business are like.

A personnel manager in a leading Chicago bank, who also worked with an airline and a food processor, answered a question like yours this way: "Companies must use the summertime these days to get to know a student and to have a student know them. Top new employees are in short supply."

2. The encouragement of creativity. I touched on this earlier (the Percy story was one example; Illinois Bell was another) but here are other specific examples of how companies systematically try to stimulate creative thinking among their employees.

A Wall Street Journal article told how companies are "growing their own" middle and top management executives. AT&T recruits a college graduate for executive training, gives him a year of special training, then offers him a job that normally would go to someone a great deal more experienced. If he handles it well, he is on his way. The Journal notes that, although half the recruits wash out or quit during the first five years, the chances for real responsibility definitely raise trainee morale.

U.S. Rubber uses an "early identification program" to "grow" its executives. Each divisional manager annually lists men of management potential—as many as they wish below the age of 28, not more than 10 between 28 and 30, 5 between 30 and 32, and 3 between 32 and 35. Each of these men is "kept current" and important job openings are first from the group.

When you consider that DuPont, for example estimates that someone is promoted every 10 working minutes, you can see how important it is to a company—even from a completely self-serve viewpoint—to encourage its employees to develop creativity and know-how and to put these new developed assets to work as productively and quickly as possible.

—Robert W. Galvin
Chairman, Motorola Inc.

BUSINESS AND YOU

This open letter about business is written by a businessman to one of six student correspondents on six different campuses. It is the tenth in a continuing series being published in 29 student newspapers across the country.

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