

by Paul E. Smith, Assistant Dean, Director of Executive Management Seminars and Eugene Emerson Jennings, Professor, Business Administration College of Business & Public Service, Michigan State University.

CAPACITY for change is the central characteristic of an effective executive. Business is today highly dynamic and needs men who can both sense change and control it. But administering change means also being capable and willing to change.

About the capacity for change there seems to be no little amount of confusion. There is the long established belief that as one gets older he loses his capacity to change. Because emergence at the top is simultaneously marked by getting older, the men who are responsible for the administration of change are the very ones least able to change.

However, during this last decade of rapid, acute change this belief has been exploded as a myth. What is most evident today is that those at the top who supposedly have become old and rigid are sometimes the very ones who have shown as much ability and willingness to change and cope with changes as the younger, lower level executive.

If anything, the men most apt to be cautious and conservative are the men in the middle management ranks who are necessarily accustomed to systematic approaches to routine problems.

What seems now evident is that the capacity and willingness to change is more related to the opportunity to change than to age or position. The idea that "old dogs can't learn new tricks" or "old executives just fade away" is hardly a realistic or valid approach to administration in a world of business customarily beset with change.

Business today faces the acute problem of staying alive by translating change potentials of executives into creative performance. Creative performance does not simply happen by wishing. What is needed is an executive development program based upon the following considerations.

1. That every individual has change potential.
2. That the company must purposely accelerate this change potential.
3. That the job demands resources outside the company.
4. That the individual himself must assume

the major responsibility.

Change goes on regardless of age. All individuals are capable of change and all do change. This was illustrated recently by a businessman who according to the current myth was beyond the age of productive change. One of the largest corporations in America offered him an opportunity to sell out with the understanding that he would agree not to start another business of the same type and character for five years. Since the man was 66 years old, it was thought that by the time the five year period had elapsed, he would no longer be interested in re-entering business. It so happened, however, that when this man reached the age of 71 he began another business of the same kind that he had previously sold.

There are many examples to offer as evidence of change potential in senior citizens. We have all seen rigid types of people who seemingly do not change. But rigidity is seldom adhered to rigidly. It must necessarily grow less or more. Therefore, even those who seemingly do not change actually do change.

The study and counseling of business executives offers two types of executive minds. In extreme form they are the open and the closed, the receptive and the rigid. Although all executives are a little of each, some tend to be more of one than the other.

The Closed Mind

The closed mind tends to reject new opportunities, ideas, and attitudes. Gradually the executive becomes very limited in what he is willing or able to do beyond those abilities that he has learned early to master. He becomes grooved.

The open mind is in free and direct contact with reality. It is sensitive to change outside of which the closed mind becomes increasingly unaware. However, both open and closed minds offer potentials for change. The open minded executive is progressive, the closed minded executive is regressive. The open mind wants new experiences that may not necessarily be related to old ideas and techniques that he has found useful. He seeks opportunities to continue to practice those things he has found use-

ful in the past.

The Open Mind

The open mind seeks out ideas that will replace ones previously experienced. The closed mind seeks out only those that fit into his established habit patterns. Both individuals grow but in different directions.

They grow to accommodate respective needs. When the closed mind is in the midst of a relatively stable environment it is not so noticeable. It is productive to both the individual and his company because changes do not occur; often he does not need to change.

In such an environment the open minded executive becomes like a bull in the china closet. He gets frustrated because no one seems to appreciate his new ideas and skills and techniques. Because he does not present himself as a set object, no one seems to be able to predict him. Consequently, he incurs much frustration in himself and others.

The closed mind may also be looked upon as a trouble maker, a rebel, a misfit, an obstructionist and may incur the reputation for being unstable or even neurotic if placed in an organizations that is best with changes and new problems.

The important thing to know is that, depending upon the organization, both the open and the closed mind may have considerable to offer. But as a business becomes more dynamic and volatile, the closed mind becomes less useful and less well received. He offers change potential that is in conflict with what is needed. What he too often seeks in the form of help and advice and opportunity is too often against his better interests and that of his company.

Both Minds Change

But neither the open mind nor the closed mind is standing still. Both are changing but in different ways. The closed mind is seeking to become closed, the open mind is seeking to become and stay open. For both, change is inevitable and different.

Generally the open mind will seek out his own changes. His problem is that he spreads himself all over and needs to have his interest directed into proper channels. He tends to want to do everything differently so that he does nothing thoroughly. His problem is mostly supervision.

The closed mind is a much more difficult

problem. A closed mind tends to actively resist opening. Telling him that he is rigid only brings doubt, disagreement, or hostility. He will reject the idea of his being a closed mind by insisting that he is not. What he seldom realizes is that in order to prove his point he must be more open than what he is.

Consequently, merely telling him of his problem only makes matters worse. He must be given a rather unusual set of responsibilities and experiences that will gradually enable him to see himself as others see him and to begin to change.

What Can the Company Do?

There are three major resources which may be used today to keep open minds efficiently open and gradually open the closed minds. First is the company. Crucial to whether executives have open or closed minds is whether the company values change and positively accepts executives who excel in developing new attitudes and ideas.

If executives are promoted because they have mastered skills of the past, they can hardly be expected to keep open minds about skills needed for the future. If the company has a narrow interpretation of its role in society, executives can hardly be expected to look upon broad social economic problems as relevant and important.

What is so lethal in closing open minds is the practice of identifying future usefulness with youth. It is a tragic waste of manpower to assume that there is an upper age limit beyond which retreading is impossible. The fact of the matter is that companies simply have too much invested in their executives to cast them aside for young college graduates.

Because older executives will change anyhow, too much accent on youth may drive them to compete with youth by overtaxing their old habits. They may become all the more grooved and rigid; but they need not.

Next to spirit of the company regarding change and change potential of its members is the value system of the executive's immediate superior. If the superior does not value and accept change, feels uncertain in the midst of flux, the subordinate will tend to accept this response as the norm for him. The narrow-minded superior tends to breed narrow-minded subordinates.

What constitutes a mature approach is one

that values both practical skills and techniques to get the job done and good ideas and attitudes to do it still better. In effect, this will help the executive to learn what channels of his mind may be closed off to become more effective and efficient and what channels may be broadened and deepened. So important is the climate of the company that it equals and in some cases surpasses what the individual himself has within him as change potential.

What Kind of Executive Development Programs?

The second major resource is outside the company. Keeping open minds open and opening closed minds is something the very nature of which exceeds the resources of the company. Life within any bounded area or function essentially means limiting the mind to a routine set of experiences. Furthermore, success with any organization necessarily means that the individual learns to place his chips on the few ideas, skills, insights, and abilities needed to be effective. This concentration upon a few is largely reinforced by the specialization of life at the middle levels. These acquired skills and abilities are too often merely expanded with progress upwards rather than adding new categories of skill reflecting the broader base of change potential.

Consequently, business is finding today the need to send executives out. Even in-company training programs are susceptible to in-breeding to some extent. Some companies encourage their executives to become more active in the community. However, the closed mind typically seeks out experiences in the community that feed on his previously developed skills and abilities. What is needed is to expose the closed mind systematically to experience he would unconsciously shun or fail to seek out diligently.

This means that executives need training programs that will force them to experience new ideas, problems, and attitudes. Not just any executive development program will do this. The big fad today is workshops. However, one cannot necessarily say that workshops are for closed minds or open minds. As a general rule, workshops are designed to probe into rather narrow subject matter areas. They permit a group of experienced executives to share technique, procedures, and methods. They tend to be creative only if the participants are open minded and are given an opportunity to express their creativity and imagination.

Seminars are popular today, too. But are likely to be more academic in character, tend to cover a greater variety of subjects on a rather theoretical base, and are often somewhat unstructured. They tend to be dominated by the open minded executive who wants to learn new ideas and developments over a broad spectrum or at best they allow the closed mind freedom to rebel against impracticality which for him accomplishes very little except helps him feel relieved and justified. He returns home the same as when he left.

The study of cases, an old method of executive development, depends to a great extent on analysis of past history. It is time consuming and does not generally encourage new ideas or develop a creative attitude toward change, nor are new channels of thought likely to be developed except those inherent in the case or in the group of executives. Research that has a bearing on the case is often unknown or even worse is ignored.

What the company should be on the lookout for are executive development programs which stress innovation, new ideas, and new developments. The programs which are led by people who will offer a stimulating experience and remove people from the routine and commonplace, which provide an opportunity for study and contemplation and which provide reading lists for further study when the executive returns to his job. These programs should expose him to advanced thinking people from other industries. These are the programs the closed minded executive needs to attend and from which he will receive the maximum benefit.

Self-insight Programs

However, what really precede this kind of an executive development program are programs that will help executives understand what are their change potentials and barriers. These are insight and sensitivity programs that help the executive to achieve self-analysis and awareness. Their major value is in helping closed minds know what channels have become blocked off and how they might be opened. They help open minds that tend to be too wandering to know what channels might become blocked off without loss of productiveness and satisfaction.

There are many programs set up to help the executive achieve self-insight but many of these do not provide the kind of insight needed to understand change potentials and barriers. Many

of them provide insights and skills in the tools of management which may be accepted, modified, rejected, depending upon the orientation the executive has toward change.

The heart of the matter, however, namely his ability and willingness to change, is seldom approached. Consequently, the closed mind becomes more sensitive to what he already is and the open mind to what he is not. One because the program nourished his demand for breadth, the other because it fed his demand for insight into what he already knows. The closed mind will be driven further into his already established skills and abilities. He adds new skills and techniques to make his old ones more productive without necessarily adding new ones.

Either executive may on the other hand not change at all because the program failed to appeal to him in his own way. In the one case, he moves in directions different from his past and, in the other case, he moves in directions that are compatible with his past.

In other words, the closed mind tends to use many programs to justify what he already knows. This individual will attend the program and not contribute anything to the discussion. He tends to think of college professors as too theoretical. He tends to read only those things that apply to his specific operation or job. He tends to associate with people who come from his own social group, professional background, or industrial structure.

His major job is to put the professor in his place, to teach him what he does not know because, after all, he has never met a payroll. He cannot accept new thoughts and new ideas for what they are. Consequently, having programs that do not give insight into an executive's change barrier really tends to help close minds already becoming closed.

A program of action aimed at opening closed minds necessarily means that experiences within the company and outside must be carefully tailored to release the change potentials and barriers of each executive. Unless the barriers are removed through self-insight, the change potentials of the closed mind will prescribe utilizing these new experiences in merely old ways. The executive will become more grooved than before even though he has just come back from an executive development program.

How to Open Your Mind

The third major resource is within the in-

dividual himself. The executive does not need to wait until his company sends him to training programs to commence finding out what are his change potentials and barriers. One of the easiest things for him to feel is the closing of his mind. When this happens he feels extremely uncomfortable and anxious in the midst of any change and flux.

This may include being resentful of new ideas, new bosses and new colleagues. Often the closed mind becomes upset when traditional policies or practices are attacked. All of these resistants are recorded inwardly by strong feelings of hostility. The closed mind is unhappy and intractable.

Therefore, if you have a closed mind, you will very well know it. The next step after discovery of your condition is to pinpoint your areas of rigidity. Look into your practices on previous jobs to see what you did best and poorest. Assess your present opportunities in terms of what you would want to do were you given free rein. Be on the lookout for opportunity, for ways to be different, especially in small matters at first. Gradually tackle your bigger responsibilities with the aim of breaking set or pattern.

Nothing begins to open minds as well as becoming interested in doing things differently. Chances are your mind will become fresh and alive to the extent that you want it to become fresh and alive. There is no substitute for the desire. But the desire will not come easily. Few closed minded people ever seek to be cured of their rigidity. The moment they do, however, they are well on their way.

One must be aware of the fact that it took a long time to become rigid and intractable. Strong inner determination is needed to overcome what has set in before. But also patience will be needed. Your closed mind will not become open in a day or two. There will be times when you will get depressed because of the conflict between staying with the old or going with the new. Desire, determination, and patience are all essential at these crucial times.

But the most important thing that you can do is to assume responsibility for knowing what kinds of executive development programs are available and making sure that when you are set you go to those that will work on your change potentials and barriers.

Your mind is well on the way to becoming open when you sincerely entertain the need to go back to school. What is so common among closed minded executives is the inability to be-

lieve that they can learn from others. Especially are they unwilling to believe that they can learn from others who are not executives, who have not "met a payroll" or "negotiated a labor contract."

The fact of the matter is that executive development programs are today a permanent institution. They thrive not because professors can teach businessmen how to run their companies, but because professors offer a climate in which new ideas can be developed by businessmen themselves. By getting out and into these creative climates, businessmen can become challenged to see things differently than when they are deeply involved in their routine problems

and practices.

In the face of the huge acceptance of executive development programs, the executive should not be ashamed or humiliated by being sent or by asking to be sent. At such times, companies should be well aware of what programs will be most useful to him. This means that both the executive and his company must appreciate that change potentials exist even in those who are senior citizens.

One thing is certain; the executive will change. What he needs is help to translate his change potential into creative performance. In this way the success of both the executive and his company will be better assured.

** Reprinted by permission from the September, 1961 issue of "Personnel Journal".*

SPECIAL ARTICLE

THE SURVEY OF THE SEYCHELLES ARCHIPELAGO

'One of our members, Mr. A.C. McEwen, O.L.S., D.L.S., F.R.G.S., was engaged for three years on the survey of a part of the world little known to most of us, the Seychelles Archipelago.

This work was recently carried out under the direction of the Bureau of Technical Assistance Operations of the United Nations. Mr. McEwen at a recent annual meeting gave a brief account of the survey. Since then he has been good enough to place at our disposal a copy of his report entitled "Land Survey and Land Registration in Seychelles". His report is divided into an Introduction and five Parts.

The Introduction gives an outline of the problem, Part I deals with the present position in relation to land surveys and registration, Part II with Topographical Mapping, Part III with Control Survey, and Part IV is a draft of proposed regulations and laws dealing with surveys and surveyors. The whole report comprises about 100 pages. The following is an attempt to condense this report for publication.'

W. J. Baird, Secretary

Introduction

The Seychelles Archipelago lies in the Indian Ocean between 4 and 10 degrees South Latitude and between 46 and 56 degrees East Longitude. It contains a nucleus of granitic islands, surrounded by a number of islands of coral formation. The total number of islands, islets and named rocks is about 116.

Mahe is the largest and most important island, with an area of 55-1/2 square miles, and lies about 990 miles east of Mombasa. The capital and only town is Victoria. The climate is quite temperate, seldom exceeding 85 degrees F. The rainfall is about 100 inches a year. The total population is 41,468, most of whom are descendants of the original French settlers and of their slaves. English is the official language. French is also spoken and taught. A patois called Creole is widely spoken.

The main export crop is cocoanut. Other crops are cinnamon, vanillia and patchouli. The land is divided into holdings, known locally as estates. These total about 2200, of which about 1000 contain less than one acre, and a few over 1000 acres. A holding represents an ownership, rather than a geographic division. The Land Law is based on the Old French Civil Code, modified by local ordinances.

The Survey Problem

The survey problem was two-fold - to provide a basis for a cadastral sur-