

THE PHILOSOPHICAL RESEARCH SOCIETY

Manly P. Hall, President and Founder

Patricia C. Ervin, Vice President

CONTRIBUTORS' BULLETIN

October, 1984

EMPLOYMENT AS DISCIPLINE



Dear Friends:



My business career began and ended on Wall Street and Maiden Lane in Lower Manhattan. It was just a few steps from the Stock Exchange and easy walking distance from old Trinity Church. It was many years ago and probably there have been major changes in business policies, but I often wish I had been able to stay there at least one additional year. My first job was in the insurance business and I was one of a dozen or more young men between sixteen and twenty who were starting at the bottom which they hoped would prove their lifetime careers.

The head of the department was an elderly gentleman whom I will call Mr. Hamilton. His desk was in a glass-walled cubicle which no one entered without permission. His right-hand man, who would also be his successor, had bushy red hair and a temperament to match. He was a disciplinarian, but I will say for him that he was fair and honorable in most matters. When anything went wrong, the executive branch of the business located on the top floor brought it to the attention of Mr. Hamilton who called in his assistant and said, "Take care of it."

Mr. Jackson every day walked over to the time clock, which was not an adornment, and then he would approach some bright young man and say, "You were five minutes late this morning." For a second offense a note of severity was added, "Late again." Then there was a slight pause and Mr. Jackson added, "If you are late again in the near future, don't bother to come in. You are no longer an employee." This usually took care of the situation. Every once in awhile several of the young men would go into a corner and engage in conversation. Mr. Jackson would give them three minutes and then he strode over with a firm remark, "This is an office--get to work." After a number of young men were drafted for military service in World War I, young ladies were engaged as secretaries. They gave Mr. Jackson a bad time when they adjourned together to the ladies' rest room for a long quiet talk.

Every employee had a certain work load assigned to him. Sometimes it was reasonable, but occasionally it piled up. Mr. Jackson never allowed one of the clerks to leave his desk until the assignment was finished. If the young man remonstrated that he couldn't complete the job during working hours, Mr. Jackson had the perfect answer. "Your working hours continue until this is done if you have to stay all night." Incidentally, there was no extra pay for overtime. Generally speaking, Mr. Jackson was unpopular, but like a drill sergeant in the army

his methods resulted in many brilliant careers.

One morning a boy delivering documents was involved in a serious accident. When Mr. Jackson was told, he rushed out of the front of the building and returned carrying the boy in his arms. He sat beside him on the floor holding his head making encouraging and sympathetic remarks until the ambulance came. He then phoned the cashier that the boy's salary was to be paid for the full period of convalescence and all the medical bills. One boy thought up the excuse that he had been required to attend his grandmother's funeral. Mr. Jackson smiled wryly and remarked, "What again? She died last year."

In those days, there was no job hopping. It was assumed that a satisfactory employee would be loyal to the company until retirement and then collect his pension for the rest of his life. To discharge a man to avoid pensioning him would be a scandal that would rock the foundations of the business district. There was usually a small raise in salary every year or two and, when a man married, his pay was raised to maintain his new household. In some cases young men in marital difficulties confided in Mr. Jackson who usually had some practical advice. In a major emergency, Mr. Hamilton was available. Working hours were from eight to five six days a week. Under the pressure of the increasing number of young ladies, the company reluctantly closed at noon on Saturday.

As the young people worked mostly on the ground floor behind counters visible to customers, Mr. Jackson was very particular about dress and courtesy. All employees had to represent the dignity of the business and had to take on irritable customers with dignity and gallantry. Impatient or short answers resulted in a frown from Mr. Jackson. Each new employee was given all necessary information for customers and the proper referrals for those with special problems. If quarrels arose among the workers, Mr. Jackson usually pontificated with good results. He explained that the company was nearly two hundred years old and was established upon a sound foundation of integrities. It paid millions of dollars in insurance claims on the occasions of the great Chicago fire and the San Francisco earthquake. It never disputed an honorable claim and, in some cases, remained in the red for as long as ten years.

Every employee was completely loyal to the company, respected it, and expected to serve it until retirement. It was the responsibility of each worker from the president down to the office boy to give a good appearance, live honorably, and attend the church of his choice. If a family got into trouble financially, the company would inquire into the matter and would assist unless extravagance or dissipation had contributed to the difficulty. If so, the employee was discharged. Mr. Jackson said, "We take care of those who take care of us. We are a family, but we live in honorable relations with each other and your job is the builder of your character."

This disciplined existence helped to support the moral character of the employees. The peer group in this case set the example for cooperation and the full acceptance of personal responsibility. Also, there was continuing proof that cooperation was essential to the maintenance of a massive organization. Each member of the firm had the security of a well established tradition and realized that there was always possibility of advancement and the recognition of unusual ability. It was regarded as a privilege to work for a firm that you could respect and admire. I remember standing one day at a window watching the great steamer Normandie burn at the docks. It cost the company a huge amount and even with underwriting the loss was a cataclysm. There was no question, however, what had to be done and

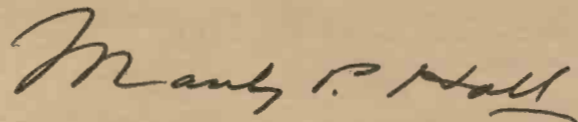
insurance payments began almost immediately.

I realized that times have changed, and twenty years after I had retired from the business world, I went down and took a last lingering look. All the faces were new. No one remembered me until I told them that I had worked there once upon a time. The successor to Mr. Jackson came forward and welcomed me cordially, told me all the gossip he thought I would be interested in, and invited me to lunch. As long as I had not been discharged for disorderly conduct, I was an honored guest and there were questions about my new activities and how my career was shaping up, but when we mentioned philosophy it was obvious this was regarded as an inconsequential career when compared to insurance.

Work in a large corporation, if accepted with the right spirit, is a wonderful support for self-employed persons who must, for one reason or another, take control of their own lives. It supports comradeship, inspires fair play, and proves beyond question that cheerful cooperation contributes more to the survival of an institution than all the competitive methods predominant today.

I am sorry you can't see me as I was then with a derby hat, a starched white vest, and spats. They were not actually necessary, but Mr. Jackson felt that I was showing proper respect for the business, whereas some young men who did not wear sober and refined neckties were regarded as less dedicated.

Most sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Manly P. Hall". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned below the typed name.

MANLY P. HALL

RECOMMENDED READINGS:

Bach, Marcus	Major Religions of the World	(P)	\$4.95
Bolen, Jean Shinoda	The Tao of Psychology	(P)	\$7.95
Brinton, Daniel	Myths of the Americas	(P)	\$8.50
Capt, E. Raymond	Jacob's Pillar	(P)	\$3.00
Capt, E. Raymond	King Solomon's Temple	(P)	\$3.00
Church, W.H.	Many Happy Returns	(H)	\$14.95
Earhart, H. Byron	Religions of Japan	(P)	\$6.95
Elder, Sam	A Christmas Celebration	(H)	\$5.00
Heilbut, Anthony	Exiled In Paradise	(P)	\$13.95
Hopkins, Lee Bennett	Surprises	(H)	\$8.95
Ikeda, Daisaku	Life; An Enigma, a Precious Jewel	(P)	\$15.00
Leach, Maria (Ed.)	Standard Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology, and Legend	(P)	\$25.95
Peterson, Susan	Lucy M. Lewis. American Indian Potter	(H)	\$49.95
Sanford, John	The Invisible Partners	(P)	\$6.95
Skutch, Robert	Journey Without Distance	(P)	\$7.95
Spink, Kathryn	I Need Souls Like You	(H)	\$10.95
Urquhart, Brain	Hammarskjold	(P)	\$14.95

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