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THE INDUSTRIAL ENGINEER AS
AN EXECUTIVE*By* R. Q. ARMINGTON

Rapid strides in the industries of the world have materially changed the conditions and requirements of an executive. Formerly, when competition was not so keen, it was merely necessary to have a product that people wanted, no detailed knowledge of manufacturing processes being required. Now, however, the man ambitious to be a leader of industry has a much more difficult problem to face.

Until recently most men received their engineering training as strictly applied to the product itself; this included a study of materials, stresses and designs. In fact this attitude still is found to be quite prominent in some phases of special work. Now, however, the rise of mass production industries has taken the emphasis from the design and laid it on the production and its costs. In order for the future executive to cope with this change in progress it is also necessary to vary the lines of education. Where before the engineer was limited to his product, he now must have a working knowledge of cost accounting, economics, work analysis, standardization, simplification, waste elimination, work routing, and labor problems. With this acquaintance of the factory functions, it is possible to work toward the top much faster.

The handling of men is a factor that cannot be overlooked, in fact it is much harder to master this art than it is to get acquainted with the product. Perhaps the greatest factor in getting along with others is personality, and some people seem to have this born in them, but others of us have to keep continually working with ourselves to master it. The engineer oftentimes is so deeply interested in his work that he does not display interest in the other fellow; this latter interest is always essential in the art of getting along with others. A cheerful word now and then will win friends and may help to win promotion. One must also be honest and have an integrity of purpose. A plant always does better under a likable and dependable leader. Oftentimes arguments arise when it is necessary to show the other fellow his mistakes. In such cases it is of great advantage to be able to get the other fellow's viewpoint and appreciate it. A knowledge of men is a great asset to anyone—engineer, executive or one in any profession. The time has now come when the engineer in school should start this development of his personality and ability to get along with others. In my estimation this is fifty per cent of a man's education. Surely there is ample chance to get this development with all the engineering societies, activities and such with which the student comes in contact.

The executive of today must be broad-minded and have a knowledge of selling as well as the manufacturing and designing end of the business.

The modern manager is chosen by his ability to make profits continuously and consistently. The industrial engineers with their well rounded training and an ability to handle men should certainly qualify for these positions of leadership, and we look to them for the executives of the future.