

THE VISITOR

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COOPERATING WITH AGRIBUSINESS

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"What does industry want from the expanding horizons of vocational education?" Since vocational education is an integral part of our total educational system, it seems appropriate to cover the broad educational field, starting with the college level, working down to the high school age group and give a review of personnel demands. There are inter-relationships between educational levels that merit attention.

There are "career opportunities" from accounting to veterinary medicine in the meat packing industry alone. There are over 60 fields of specialization listed. There are 1600 types of jobs available in the United States. Most require college training, but there are some less technical areas for the non-college individual.

THE COLLEGE GRADUATE

The more important qualities that industry looks for in a college graduate are (1) ability to communicate; (2) leadership traits; (3) motivation and enthusiasm; (4) mental ability and agility; (5) suitable education and experience; (6) suitable temperament and personality for the job; (7) attitude towards transfer from one area to another.

Here in a broad way you will begin to see that when industry hires people, we're not interested in "cordwood". People are individuals, all different. Never forget that industry is in business to be profitable. Without profit wages cannot be paid, research cannot be financed, taxes cannot be paid. The success of the employer is determined by the attitudes and abilities of the employees, how they feel about the job and how they work at it.

College graduates come to us via a rather rigorous selection and screening process by virtue of the fact that they've graduated from college. We expect a higher level of competence from this type of applicant. Our greatest competitors for the real sharp young men are the graduate programs of colleges and universities.

The items previously listed are not presented in any order of importance, but I placed ability to communicate first to point out that no matter what other qualifications a man may have, he is a "dead duck" if he can't get his ideas across. He must be able to express himself and sell his own brainpower. I'm sure you recognize that being able to communicate ideas can have its start and grow in the Vo-Ag classroom and FFA chapter....doesn't it in yours? The personnel manager in our

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company has indicated that he would require four semesters in "communication" if he were dean of a college.

Leadership...are you making the most of leadership training in your Vo-Ag program and the FFA? I know of no other high school subject which can do so much for so many....and do it so well. If America cannot expect the future agricultural leaders to come out of the Vo-Ag departments....where else can or should we expect them to come from?

In reference to the attitude towards moving from one part of the country to another, let me comment that a large industry, of necessity, must move people around the country to provide advancement and to get the job done. If the wife won't leave her home town her "man" has limited possibilities for advancement. The department level man who has worked for our company for 40 years has averaged 7 different moves.

At this point I want to state that in our opinion there is a great shortage of college graduates trained in the fields of sales (marketing) and distribution. You might consider this in planning your next year's program of work in vocational agriculture. By all means emphasize it with your Vo-Ag students.

VOCATIONAL-TECHNICAL TRAINING

When considering the employment of a junior college, vocational school, or a two-year technical school graduate industry looks for: (1) intelligence and capacity; (2) work history, if any; (3) specific areas of training and interests; (4) leadership traits; (5) suitable temperament and personality for job; (6) reasons for not completing a four-year college program; (7) motivation; (8) reading, writing, arithmetic; (9) age and draft status.

On the technical educational level, many people seem excited about this as though it were a new category. I've had some difficulty finding real enthusiasm in large industries. We see some need for technicians as assistants in laboratories and in design and drafting, sales-service and sales of standardized products. We hire these graduates as trainees at the supervisory staff level, as production incentive people and as salesmen and distributors in some areas. Currently there is a real shortage of two-year or junior college graduates as engineering technicians....(particularly in our dairy and poultry plants) those with refrigerating and air conditioning experience. Some demand exists for young men in most areas

who will work in the data processing and programming field. Those with farm background have some opportunity in the farm store field now developing throughout the nation. Remember that we are selecting now from the educational attainment group those who have some education beyond high school. We recognize that a college degree does not guarantee anything. I'm sure you know that I must generalize. But to make my point, if a company has set a standard where a certain job requires a college degree, (B.S. or M.S.) anything short of such a degree will not qualify.... if there is a choice in the matter.

There is a dire need for good secretarial help; this includes young women, particularly those who can proficiently take dictation and type with speed and accuracy. The average high school graduate typist can't "hoe the row". Good clerks and accounting trainees are also in demand.

Reading, writing, and arithmetic! It's sad but true, here lies the bulk of trouble in hiring people who must communicate by giving instruction, writing, and applying simple mathematics. I consider it a serious crime against our society to graduate those students from our elementary and high schools who can't write legibly; who can't read with a fair degree of speed and comprehension; and who can't solve simple problems of adding, subtracting and multiplying. Agriculture is a vocation that demands a degree of proficiency in reading, writing and arithmetic. Are you assured in your mind that your graduates are adequately trained. And how about you? I receive many hand-written letters from Vo-Ag students and Vo-Ag teachers and often have difficulty deciphering the hieroglyphics. Is this the image of agriculture you want to leave?

WHAT ABOUT HIGH SCHOOL

The qualities industry looks for in a high school graduate are: (1) specific areas of training and interests; (2) intelligence and capacity; (3) reason for stopping educational process; (4) personality, deportment, appearance; (5) maturity, age, draft status; (6) attitude towards hard work and menial jobs.

Probably most important here are age and maturity. There are so many restrictions for those under 18 that to hire young people in this age group often becomes a legal problem. Between 18 and 21 presents other problems ranging from "worry of the draft", to "marrying that gal", let's throw in a "hot-rod" and "the gang".

Remember that we're now dealing with

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the lower end of the non-college graduate group. Frankly, we are not looking for these individuals in the "office" so this places them in the plant or "hourly wage" group. Here it is that they must compete and come up the seniority ladder...which is long and tedious.

Currently there is a real shortage for those who have mechanical comprehension, those who can read a blueprint, sketch a layout and are adept at fixing things and working with automatic equipment. The following is what is considered in an interview: (1) interest in our jobs; (2) ability to communicate; (3) physical appearance; (4) neatness; (5) voice; (6) self confidence; (7) poise; (8) energy; (9) extroversion; (10) leadership; (11) aggressiveness; (12) scholarship; (13) mental maturity.

Each person interviewing the prospective employee uses this type of evaluation on each applicant. This is only a guide. We also require applicants for salaried positions to take the Otis test (general intelligence) and a critical thinking type of test. These, too, are only guides to help us make a decision. With all the facts gathered, the applicant is rated in this manner: (5) outstanding (one of the best we have seen); (4) thoroughly competent (good; capable of growth); (3) satisfactory....no more, no less; (2) cannot recommend; (1) completely unsuitable. The purpose is to categorize people into a uniform system throughout the company. It has limitations and is only another tool in the total program.

SUMMARY

1. Industry needs people and machines. It prefers machines over people when jobs can be done more efficiently. Whether this always represents a proper moral attitude is not the issue here. Quite often the lack of talent or the cost of labor forces the employer to the machine. But industry does need people, lots of them, and always will. It will need them from all educational levels.
2. It has been fairly well documented that 1½ jobs exist for every agriculturally trained college graduate, and that agribusiness is seeking between 13,000 and 15,000 college graduates with such agricultural background. Today about 25 million, or 37% of all employed people are working in the complex of agribusiness. Many of them are scientists and in this connection it may be noted that 90% of all sci-

entists who ever lived are living today.

If today's shortage of qualified college graduates with an agricultural background exists, ponder what we can expect in the year 2000....only 33 years away! The population needs of the United States alone will be 200 to 300% greater than now.

3. Since the colleges have not produced the agribusiness graduates demanded by industry (and these include agricultural education graduates) we, as a company, have been forced to change some of our employment policies. Where once we diligently tried to hire college graduates on the buying, selling and managerial training levels, we have been forced to accept two-year college people for some of the responsible positions. And yet it is your responsibility and mine to encourage all young people to train themselves vocationally and exert dedicated effort to get out of life all it can offer.
4. We do need applicants who have an understanding of basic economics, of free enterprise and free markets. This is what industry expects from vocational education as I see it.

INDUSTRY DOES NOT WANT

1. A man with a B.S. degree who wants a research job. Very few are qualified for it.
2. A chap who wants a job in one section of the country and never wants to move. We recommend that he work for a small company or start his own agribusiness, a good farm business if he is fortunate enough to have the opportunity.
3. The man who is primarily interested in the "fringe" benefits and retirement program.
4. The young fellow who wants us to tell him how much he is going to be earning ten years from now and where he is going to be. We are not fortune tellers.
5. The chap who lets his wife run the family. Sometimes we think she is the one we ought to hire.
6. The "loner". A man must be able to work with other people.
7. Men who write sloppy application letters.
8. The man who wants a "marketing"

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- job but not "sales". This is asking to have your cake and eat it too.
9. The fellow who has just been squeezing by all along the education ladder.
 10. The "farm boy" just because he has been exposed to hard work. One big drawback is his lack of experience in working for someone besides his Dad. This does not mean that farm experience is not valuable; it is a real advantage.

WHAT ARE THE EXPANDING HORIZONS

All the talk about the diminishing demand for future farmers is poppycock; it is short sighted and dangerous thinking. That adjustments are in order is obviousthese adjustments have been in order constantly from the time vocational agriculture was conceived.

With 3½ million farms as shown in the 1963 census and with the average farmer owner's age at the 50 year level, I have difficulty visualizing a surplus of vocational agriculture students. Within 15 years we will have to replace at least half of the present farm owners, and I would like to think that we should have a surplus of trained food and fiber producers to draw from to fill the vacancies.

To water down the Vo-Ag program into general agriculture is repulsive to me. I contend too, that FFA membership should be limited to boys who live on farms or those with production enterprises. I expect our future farm leadership to come from this group and deplore the idea that we will permit urban boys to take the FFA leadership positions and the training and experience away from rural young men. The very nature of farm living limits the opportunities of farm people to exposure in leadership training. And this goes for girls in the FFA, too. I have difficulty

figuring out how a female FFA officer could leave the proper impression with industry executives. That goes too for boys in FHA. Girls taking Vo-Ag is in order, as well as boys taking home economics. But the organizations cannot stand for the ridicule. I admit I am prejudiced.

WHAT IS NEEDED

I believe vocational agriculture instructors, singly and through the efficient state and national organizations, must continually re-evaluate and identify the controlling purpose of the program. Who really knows the needs, aspirations and hopes of your community better than you? Does Washington? Does your state capitol? Does your school board? Does your superintendent? Or, do you?

I believe every community should be selfish in wanting its young people to want to live a lifetime there—and to plan accordingly.

Finally, as a vocational agriculture instructor, you have the enormous responsibility to teach, to recruit and to counsel. You are looked upon as the "leader" by the rural people in your school district. I challenge you to strengthen that image, be diligent in thought and planning, provide action that denotes your dedication to the welfare of your students and community, show evidence of your appetite for knowledge and give guidance for responsible leadership.

My final prejudiced statement "I believe in the future of vocational agriculture"....do you?

Editor's Note: The article by Mr. Moeller is reprinted with permission of Mr. A. A. Pacciotti, Editor of The Ag Man.