

ADVANCE COPY



THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP

Dr. John C. Flanagan

This lecture has not been edited by the speaker. It has been reproduced directly from the reporter's notes for the students and faculty for reference and study purposes until such time as the edited official copy is available.

No direct quotations are to be made either in written reports or in oral presentations based on this unedited copy. Quotations may be made only from the final edited, published lecture.

INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES
WASHINGTON, D. C.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP

15 September 1955

CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
INTRODUCTION: Capt. C. E. Mott, USN, member of the faculty, Industrial College of the Armed Forces.....	1
SPEAKER: Dr. John C. Flanagan, president and director of research at American Institute of Research...	
GENERAL DISCUSSION	

Reporter: R. W. Bennett.

Publication No.

L56-22

**INDUSTRIAL COLLEGE OF THE ARMED FORCES
Washington, D. C.**

THE DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP

15 September 1955

CAPT MOTT: General Hollis, faculty members, students, guests: This morning we come to the fourth of our lectures in the series on executive development. The subject of this lecture is 'The Development of Executive Leadership.'

Now, the term 'leadership' to us in the military perhaps has meant a certain thing. Certainly we are definitely at least familiar with the terminology. But sometimes I think possibly we of the military actually neglect the psychology of leadership itself. It is entirely possible that you and I may not know as much about leadership as we think we do.

Our speaker today, Dr. John C. Flanagan, is well qualified to discuss executive leadership, both in civilian life and in the military. While in the Army as a colonel, he was the ranking psychologist in the Armed Forces. Throughout his military and civilian career he has analyzed and studied people to determine what is the basis of leadership. You all have his biography, which you have read, and I am sure you can agree with me that the scope of his achievements in the field of human relations is quite large.

It is a great pleasure to present Dr. Flanagan to this audience.
Dr. Flanagan.

DR. FLANAGAN: Thank you, Captain.

Gentlemen, leadership, as you well know by this far along this week, is a very big topic; and I have some trouble trying to select those aspects of leadership that I would like to talk with you about this morning. I have decided to talk about primarily what is executive leadership, and to concentrate particularly on half a dozen studies using a new procedure called the critical incidents technique, in trying to define leadership. Then I will discuss with you some of the applications and implications of some of these ideas in developing leadership; and perhaps close with some brief notes on a possible theory of leadership which has come out of some of this work.

In trying to define the problem of what is executive leadership, or any other similar problem, there are perhaps four levels of approach which can be made. We have been spending quite a bit of time on the problem of activity and task analysis, job requirements, in the past ten years; and we have differentiated approximately four levels. I would like to present these levels as a background, so that you can see where we are in our attempt to define executive leadership.

The first of these levels is simply a description of the task performed by the person in the job, in terms of the people and materials worked with and the results to be achieved. This kind of thing is done in lay terms, and is quite descriptive and not particularly analytical.

The next level is quite similar except that psychological terms which have as much explicitness and generality as possible are

used to describe the task. The descriptions also include a statement regarding the anticipated problems and the related training that is required, based on the judgment of the person doing the analysis. Ordinarily such an activity or task analysis is performed by a person with training in applied psychology. But it may be thought of, due to the psychologist's judgment and experience, as mere observation of the activity.

The third level is a procedure consisting primarily of really collecting data from extensive observation of performance in the activity. Frequently the observations are made by persons regularly engaged in the activity and reported to a psychologist.

It has usually been found most useful to have such reports made in terms of specific behavior observed. These reports are later analyzed and translated into psychological terms by the psychologist. The important distinction here is reliance on actual reports of the performance of many persons in the activity. This addition of the extensive experience with respect to the activity seems especially important at the present time, in view of the limited knowledge concerning the nature of adaptability errors and judgments to skills.

The critical incident technique is a procedure of this type. It has the advantage of being a systematic effort to obtain a representative sample from persons competent to make such judgments of only those actions which have an important influence on obtaining the objectives of the activity. Such a procedure represents a much more

extensive undertaking than either of the other two procedures, but frequently it may be worth the extra effort. I will come back to this procedure in a moment.

I would like to present now the fourth and most precise procedure for obtaining an operational definition of performance in an activity such as leadership, because the steps important to reporting on the effectiveness of specific actions include controlled experimentation on the relative effectiveness of the various possible actions. This makes it possible to add to the definition of a person's effective performance a new dimension. Thus a person who is very effective in terms of current methods might be found to be quite ineffective when evaluated with respect to possible performance by improved methods. Of course, such a method is not only expensive in terms of cost of the experimentation, but to a very large extent its effectiveness in improving the procedure depends very much on the ingenuity, imagination, and insight of the experimenting psychologist or other investigator.

Each of the four procedures has its place. The situation will determine which is most important for the specific problem.

I would like to give you, before I cite some of the reports from critical incident studies on leadership, a fairly typical outline of the ideal executive. This one appeared in the new magazine 'Research and Engineering' in the first issue, which just came out a few weeks ago. The points stressed in this article are vision for future planning, ability to make and adhere to policy decisions, organizational ability to place

each worker in a place where he can produce with the greatest effectiveness, executive ability to get the job done and to carry out policy, administrative ability for proper delegation of operational . repetitive details, ability to evaluate the work of his staff and stimulate high-caliber scientific investigation, business ability so that the work of the staff may be integrated with the rest of the organization and through this knowledge provide a vital service to the organization, diplomacy, tact or discretion, scheduling and following up, attention to details, active participation in organizational meetings, and concern with professional upgrading and the stimulation of personnel.

I am going to cite these because there are, of course, hundreds of such reports on what makes an executive. I think they are valuable. Each one is based on at least the individual experience of one executive, if not, as in the case of this article, on interviews with a number of executives and pooled experience. However, this is fairly subjective, and the critical incidents technique tries to be a little more objective and systematic in the collection of data. I would like to have you note some of the differences as we go through some of these critical incident studies and see the possible greater pin-pointing of the problem that one can achieve through a more systematic approach.

I would like to mention three particular studies--I guess there are actually four. The first of these that I would like to mention is a new study, to be published in the next issue, I believe, of the Harvard Business Review, by Lyle M. Spencer, using the critical incidents

technique. It is a study of young presidents, done for the Young Presidents Organization; and I think it is particularly pertinent to our discussion this morning.

The second study is a study of Air Force officers done by our organization, the American Institute of Research, a few years ago. A third study is a study of Army officers; and, closely related to that, a study of Navy officers of relatively junior positions carried out for the personnel Research Branch by the American Institute of Research and in the Navy for the Bureau of Personnel by the American Institute of Research. The last of the studies is one on foremen in a manufacturing plant.

These studies are at somewhat different levels, and I thought I would start off with the top level and work into some of the other details later.

The critical incidents collected in the case of the presidents were contributed by the presidents themselves. There were about five hundred of them. A young president is a president before the age of forty. They contributed incidents that happened during the past year, of both positive and negative variety. They are something which happened of which they said, "This really helped our organization" or something of which they said, "This one was really tough on our organization, interfered considerably with our effective operation."

Now, in the critical incidents technique we cannot get away from human judgment; but we try to make the judgment not an over-all

judgment on a man on the vague carrying out of his job, but some specific thing which happened, some incident which was observed to have either a positive effect or a negative effect on achieving the goal or mission of the organization.

The incidents of the executives fall under about five main headings. One could put them under three larger headings. The first one, and by far the largest, coming from this group, was the importance of personnel selection, development, and evaluation, including learning how to delegate authority to the people under them. Although this is a fairly broad area, one of the things which was really pin-pointed in this particular study of incidents was the failure to get rid of a man who was hurting the organization, a man in a key spot.

The selection of your key men is perhaps one of the most important activities which an executive, certainly a top-level executive, has. Of course, one can't overlook development, evaluation, and improvement of those key people there. But it is sort of like a football team or a baseball team. It is pretty tough when we have a group of second raters. No matter how much time you spend coaching them, or how many new plays you give them, or other things of that sort, it is still tough. So that the selection of the key people and their evaluation and development is very important.

Now, this group found that eight times as frequently they kept a man in an important spot when they knew they should fire him, or had made an error in selection in the first place.

I might just read you a couple of these incidents to give you a little bit of the flavor of this kind of approach. One of these men said:

"Our plant manager was capable personally, but he could not get his men to work together. My failure to remove him was demoralizing the men, but I could find no specific reason for firing him. After two years I finally made up my mind and fired him without apparent cause. Since then production has gone up markedly and the supervisory and line personnel are not nearly as restless as they were."

Having sat in on some of your discussion in the case of Joe Robins this morning, I have an idea that some of you might be a little critical perhaps of these presidents for some of these remarks which suggest some lack of insight into what was going on. But we are accepting the president as a competent judge of the situation in this case and his report of the situation.

Another similar example is:

"Our sales had been declining relative to the rest of the industry. I knew for a long time that the core of the problem was lack of leadership in our sales department. It was the hardest decision of my whole life, but I finally fired my close personal friend who was also my sales manager. This act revitalized the whole organization."

There were also examples of positive action of some in these groups--illustrations of solving the problem that didn't involve firing

anybody. Here is one:

"I had two competent vice presidents, one in sales and one in manufacturing, who were feuding with each other. After weighing both men carefully, I promoted the one whom I thought had most growth potential to executive vice president, and did the best sales job I've ever done on the other in order to satisfy his ego. We now have real company harmony."

So that here is what these executives say is one of their big problems, that is, in general getting the right key man into that job, evaluating him, and taking prompt action to try to develop him and redefine his duties, or, if necessary, to fire him. This last one is what these people report to us who are in key positions in industry throughout the country as their biggest mistake--procrastinating in firing a man when they know it would be very much to the good of the organization to do it.

The second area in which the incidents reported by these presidents fell was in defining and re-analyzing the purposes of the organization. This might be termed the planning role of the leader. I think that one of the things which we have found from our studies is that, as you go up the ladder in executive positions, one finds : at the top ^{that} planning, ideas, judgment become relatively much more important than some of the smaller things, such as handling details, and even such things as tact, diplomacy, and many of these others, which you will find are quite important at the lower levels.

The executive must spend time thinking through "What is the mission of this organization? What are we trying to do? Has it changed in the past few months or years? How can we best accomplish it?" and keep his eye on the main goals, not on just little factors of "How do we do what we did yesterday a little better?"

Frequently we find that the getting of a new idea as to what to do is very much more important than all kinds of increasing efficiency in carrying out older procedures. This is a very important function for high-level executives.

The last group has to do with judgment and decision particularly. That is the financial responsibility of the executive, his function as a bargainer and negotiator, either internally with his people or at higher levels with the people for whom the organization works. Included in that also is the executive's ability to come through in a difficult emergency. Hitting in the clutch, to use a baseball expression, seems to be very important for executives especially at high-level positions.

To give you an example of a couple of these other sorts:

"We bought a company whose production was spread over ten small plants. After analyzing the problem carefully, I became convinced that we would never be able to compete profitably price-wise in these small, inefficient, high-cost mills. My board thought I was completely nuts when I decided to sell off nine of the plants, tear down most of the tenth, and with the money build one big modern plant with all the latest equipment. We're

doing fine now and have, I think, about the lowest costs in our competitive industry."

This is an example of the planning idea type executive, where one doesn't just go through the motions of running an organizational set-up, but does some basic thinking about the main purpose of the organization and what the conditions are for successful operation.

I thought that perhaps another example of the role of the president which fits in with some of the material perhaps that you have been working on in the past few weeks is given by this example of a president:

"The union was pressing us for recognition. We felt that they would lose this particular consent election, if held now, but that it was only a question of time before they would succeed. I decided to agree to immediate recognition, but in return demanded that the union cooperate in installing an incentive system. This new system has resulted in lowering unit costs as much as 40 percent, and we're all getting along fine now."

Another one on this hitting in the clutch:

"My morning's mail brought me a 60-day notice of contract termination. We are a distributor. This contract represented 95 percent of our gross. It was necessary to decide whether we should salvage what we could and close down. I decided to fight. In the next 60 days I wrote over 8,000 letters, traveled over 6,000 miles, and secured for our organization, products of equal or better potential than the one we lost."

Well, so much for the high-level executives. This little study I don't think solves the problem of just what are the requirements for a top-level executive. It is perhaps the first effort at using the critical incident technique on this level of study and using the presidents as the judges. Perhaps the chairmen of boards would be another group that might have a little different view on some of the aspects. Perhaps if we had gotten the views of subordinates, for instance, the vice presidents of some of these companies, we might also have gotten a quite different set of incidents. But I think it illustrates the approach to this kind of problem.

The next example I would like to give you is our study of Air Force officers, done by the American Institute of Research a few years ago. One of the reasons that I think this is particularly relevant is that we have a break-out of about 2500 incidents from officers below the rank of colonel and general, and about 400 incidents from the rank of colonel and general.

This reveals some real differences in the importance of various activities involved in what might be called leadership at different levels. The things which came out as being the really important things at the higher levels are: proficiency of planning and directing action, which is responsible for 40 percent of the incidents reported at the top level, but for only about 15 percent of the incidents for the group as a whole. Similarly, efficiency in supervising personnel, especially certain types of proficiency, are responsible for another 30 percent. So that between

these two they are responsible for about 70 percent of the incidents reported by this group, but only 10 percent in the other groups at the lower level of officers in this Air Force study.

I am just going to indicate briefly what some of the important items were that came out, especially in the higher-level groups. Proficiency in handling administrative details was relatively unimportant for the higher-level people. Getting cooperation was of some importance, although it is really relatively minor in comparison with some of the others. Delegating authority was a fairly large area. Developing team work, setting a good example, evaluating subordinates' work, looking out for subordinates' welfare, taking responsibility, solving problems. This is in the area especially of planning and directing action; that is, wisdom, judgment--that kind of thing. Long-range planning, taking prompt action, making correct decisions, absorbing materials.

The only item in the other areas of accepting organizational responsibility, accepting personal responsibility, and proficiency in their occupational specialties, which showed relatively large for the group, was taking responsibility for the actions of subordinates, which came out larger for the senior officers.

At this point I would like to stress that we have one fairly unique study of how the importance of various types of leadership activities changes as one goes up the scale. We gathered 10,000 incidents from infantry combat units in Korea while the fighting was

going on. This group of incidents indicated that if you go from the infantry squad member to the infantry squad leader level and the other non-coms in the group, there is only a 20 percent overlap. of In other words, the kinds of things that are important in the squad leader and the platoon leader or non-commissioned officer leader, only 20 percent are represented in the activities of the ordinary squad member. So that one cannot from observing the squad members in their day-to-day duties really get much of a notion of how they are going to perform on that 80 percent of their job which they don't ordinarily have any call to perform.

There is more overlap between, say, the squad leader, platoon leader, and the company commander. But still there are certain new emphases that develop even at these relatively junior levels. This is of importance from the point of view of the problem of trying to select from lower echelons those who can perform duties at the higher echelons.

Too frequently, I think, it is assumed that all you have to do is watch them and you can find out. But if you don't watch them in the right activities, it is not going to really do you very much good to observe them unless you are a better psychologist than most of the psychologists, because one just doesn't get an opportunity to observe the kinds of behaviors or the kinds of potential in the every-day performance of people at the lower echelons.

The Navy study we did was to get critical incidents from

aboard destroyers. We got about 1700 incidents in that instance.

The final study that I want to mention is a study done in a manufacturing concern. This happened to be Westinghouse. It was mostly foremen and supervisors. This particular study we have formalized to some extent. I would like to read you the main headings.

We came up with ten important requirements for the job of supervisor at the moderate, intermediate level, you might call it-- not the top level but the intermediate level. These are organized under two headings. One is "Dealing with employees" and the other one is "Performing management functions."

The five points we have under "Dealing with employees" include, first, "Responsibility in directing the work of the employees"; second, "Helping employees improve their job performance"; third, "Giving employees reasons and explanations for actions"; fourth, "Alert to employees' special problems"; and, fifth, "Seeing that employees are treated fairly."

Now, under each of these five main headings there are from five to eight subheadings giving quite specifically the kinds of things which have been observed to be particularly effective or ineffective with respect to this area of supervisory activity.

On "Performing management functions" the five traits are: "Planning and scheduling work," "Showing judgment and resourcefulness in getting work done," " quantity and quality of work done,"

"Taking responsibility and initiative", and "Cooperating with staff and others in higher management."

This schedule is based on several studies and is being published this month by the Association of Research Scientists along with similar performance records of hourly wage and salaried employees. This is a performance record of foremen and supervisors.

Those of you who are interested might find useful as reference an article by myself and Dr. Burns in the current issue of the Harvard Business Review describing our experience in developing these procedures with the General Motors Corporation.

I would like to go on to the problem of, granted that we have some good indication of what are the requirements of executive leadership, how can we use these in getting better leaders on the job. This breaks down into perhaps three problems, which are, selection, evaluation, and development.

The first one, selection, is one which as psychologists we feel we haven't made as much progress in as might be made. Recent studies have indicated that a general intelligence test helps a little; that a supervisor judgment test, where you have a pencil-and-paper situation, perhaps of the kind used in some of these case studies we are dealing with, helps a little also; but the main reliance has to be placed on observation of what the person has done in the past.

Now, at the ground level this is especially difficult, because the person has done hardly any supervision. After you have a man in a

supervisor's job, you can begin to evaluate what he has done in dealing with employees, planning, scheduling, getting the job done. But at the first level it is quite difficult to locate the people among the rank and file that will step out in front. Research is going on in that area.

Typical, perhaps, are some of these studies that we are doing for the Personnel Research Branch of the Adjutant General's Office at the Columbus Quartermaster Depot and the Lexington Signal Corps Depot, where we are studying two groups of foremen which are different in their performance. One is a very good group of foremen and one a very mediocre group of foremen. They are matched with respect to intelligence and supervisory tests and performance. We are working with panel interviews, performance tests, and procedural tests to see how well we can distinguish between these two groups with interviews and such evaluation procedures.

On the problem of evaluation, which is very difficult, we are using a procedure there which I mentioned here. We are using performance records as a procedure of getting better information. The performance record kept by the general foremen in these plants is a daily record of all of the important things, critical things, that is, critical incidents in other words, which he observes. They are merely records put down at the time, with later the particular behavior, and one or two notes identifying the incidents. This gives the person at the end of a period of time an indication of the strengths and weaknesses of this particular foreman, which is used primarily

as a procedure for improving his performance.

We use what we call the performance review. We bring the man in at the end of six months or some such period and talk with him, not too generalized, as to whether he is lazy or industrious or something, but, rather, about specifics--that at such-and-such time he did this.

Now, in some situations one doesn't have to parade specifics. One can cite similar cases. One has in mind a particular kind of performance where he has shown you some weakness, and can illustrate, by pin-pointing this type of thing with other incidents and other cases, what the problem is and what it leads to in other situations, and how this might be an area in which he might have some ideas for improvement.

This is quite a field in itself. It seems to us that it is essential to evaluate accurately before one can develop. If one just tries to develop people in general, a lot of the shots are scattered and wasted; whereas with a tool such as the performance record one can pin-point the needs and weakness, and go after those particular weaknesses in this particular supervisor in a much more intelligent way.

The only other thing which I would like to mention in the way of training is the use of role playing through procedures in a somewhat different way than has been previously done. On the basis of studies we have done for the Army, the Air Force, and most recently the Navy, we have made a few actual tests with this role playing, case

study method, which thus far looks very promising to us as a training procedure.

We have a series of problems in which the person is given a case very much like your Joe Robbins case, but not in quite as much detail, because we want to get a lot of problems in a fairly short period of time. We put some actors in the situation. Our training approach is that the members of the group are structured, not into groups of twelve as is done here, but into groups of four, with one or two actors, one person playing the key role, and the fourth person in the group acting as a sort of examiner or teacher.

These situations are very carefully structured to provide an opportunity to show the forty critical behaviors revealed as important for leadership in junior officers on destroyers. These forty critical behaviors are structured into these situations in these fifteen problems.

Take the man, plus the role, and we have a detailed, fairly objective check list including anywhere from twelve to twenty items. The examiner doesn't really have to be a good judge of whether this is the right thing or the wrong thing. He merely records that the man did this or didn't do this on this particular sheet that he has. Then there is discussion material right afterward as to, "Well, what are the difficulties and the things that he did wrong?" and "Why were the things that he did right probably the best things to do under these circumstances?" Then, of course, the group switches and somebody

else plays the role in a different problem. This has the advantage of a lot more experience.

I would like to report one or two things on this. One is that in recent studies we have been working with Commander Rule of the Bureau of Personnel and Lieutenant Mott of the Office of the Administrator, using some of these procedures. Lieutenant Mott plays the part of an actor, and they get a typical naval officer from one of the offices to play the lead role. After having gone through the problem and pointed out just what his errors were and why they were errors, to his group, then they will ask somebody else from the group to play a similar role in another problem.

One of the interesting things is that these habit patterns are instinctively fixed, so that this new man is very apt to make the same errors after he has just seen this other person do it, discussed them, and so on. The habit patterns just don't change by five minutes of observing how those seem to be the wrong things to do, but are much more persistent than that.

I would suggest for this reason that a lot more actual practice in playing roles, handling problems, immediate critiquing, getting good ideas, and working them out again, is essential if there is to be any real change in people's behavior patterns when people get back on the job, with respect to their leadership behavior. You can't change the basic attitude and habit patterns overnight, but we hope they can be changed, and we hope that some of these procedures

may provide a basis for doing so, after a good deal more research and development and evaluation of some of the procedures has gone on.

I would like to close with a somewhat more academic note. Some of this work has led to the formulation of a tentative theory of group behavior. This is rather abstractly phrased, as theories usually are. But it is hoped that a theory of this kind will lead to certain conclusions and hypotheses, which we can then test. And we hope--in fact, we have now one project at the American Institute of Research, sponsored by the Office of Naval Research on testing patterns of leadership behavior and saying: "Well, we will try to find out in an actual simulated leadership situation if this pattern actually gets better results than this pattern."

We feel that this kind of research may enable us to really break through into a better insight into what the most effective patterns of leadership behavior really are, not just the critical incidents level of approach of what are the best things being done now, but, granted a completely open field, what are the things which we could use which would get us the best results?

We hope to simulate closely enough in the laboratory the field situation so that the results obtained in the laboratory will be generalizable. That has been one of the chief weaknesses of leadership research--the failure to simulate a practical leadership situation enough so that the results can be generalized to the actual situation.

The theory of group behavior that I mentioned has five points.

The first one is that man is naturally gregarious. He seeks human companionship and wants to be a member of a group.

The second is that he tends to accept the obligations of the group that are represented by decisions of the majority in the group. Ordinarily he is a member of several groups at the same time, and these groups have varying influences on his behavior in accordance with the attractiveness of the groups themselves.

Third, where a choice is presented, he tends to prefer that group which will satisfy his personal needs most adequately. These needs vary with the relative strength of the individual's inherent and acquired drives, his values, his interests, and his immediate goals.

Fourth, persons with experience in groups tend to recognize that an executive is needed to coordinate and direct the activities of the group members; that the achievement of assigned group functions requires flexibility of action/ ⁱⁿ decision making, ^{and} planning, differentiation of the assignments; and that the effectiveness of the group will vary proportionally to the leader's skill in carrying out this role.

Fifth, the group leader will be accepted and given responsibility by the group members to the extent that he aids them in satisfying their personal needs, regardless of the group's effectiveness in achieving the assigned goals.

This theory is one which I hope may be fruitful in developing hypotheses.

I would like to just close by saying that in the leadership field we do not believe that we really have done enough experimentation and evaluation to have the answers yet. I think that some answers are quite obvious, even to the inexperienced person who has done no systematic collection of information. But I think that if we are going to go forward and get the ideal patterns of leadership, we are going to have to do a good deal more research from carefully controlled analysis of problems and testing of hypotheses to find out what are the most effective patterns of leadership behavior.

Thank you.

CAPT MOTT: Dr. Flanagan is ready for your questions.

QUESTION: You said that man is naturally gregarious. Do you think that same statement would apply if you had opposite groups of other nations, say, Canadians, or particularly French or Germans--some of the other nations besides Americans?

DR. FLANAGAN: Yes. I think that basically this applies to all groups. I think there are factors in the early training and customs in various cultures and societies which produce a little overlay on them. But I think that essentially man is a gregarious animal and that no amount of culture overlay can really change that.

QUESTION: Doctor, you said that eight times more often than any other circumstance these company presidents felt that they should have fired people that weren't satisfactory. Do I understand that they made very little attempt toward rehabilitation or correction

before they reached this decision as to which they eliminated the individual?

DR. FLANAGAN: No. I think this: In spite of a good deal in the way of attempting to develop and rehabilitate, as you say, and although in some instances they were able to work out decisions, these people were presidents and they were talking about people right under them on the top level--the vice president level and the key personnel level. It is pretty difficult to move one of those down in the organization. He either has to stay or get out, usually.

Now, in one instance, as I recall, it was mentioned ^{that} where there were two vice presidents, one was given a superior role, which seemed to solve the problem. But in the case of competence to perform the job, there also is the possibility of redefining the job, of reshuffling the responsibilities.

I think all these people were talking about people who were in positions of key importance to the organization, who could not perform in those positions. Now, one could argue as to whether you should try to find a spot for them or get rid of them. I have observed personally situations along this line, and it is very difficult to just outright get rid of these individuals, although probably in many instances that is the best thing for the organization.

QUESTION: I wonder if you have comparable statistics on the experience with the senior military people corresponding to difficult choices for the presidents.

DR. FLANAGAN: I don't have the breakdown in the incidents from the military in this way. The incidents at the higher levels were not as frequent, as large a sample; and so I just don't have that particular sort of thing. I know in the military it is much more difficult, although one can get a person transferred if he just doesn't work out. But it is a difficult situation.

I recall one very outstanding example of this kind, which I used before as an illustration, where in Sardinia, General Webster had a group commander who was just not doing the job. What he did was to put him on his own staff, pull him out of the group commander's spot and put his best squadron commander there. They changed from the worst group to the best group inside of ten days, and stayed there for over a year. This is in terms of actual performance--in strikes, destroyed bridges, bombing accuracy--as well as OWOL's and a whole lot of other things.

Here was a case where changing one man changed the effect on a thousand or so people. Here we had an absolutely worthless group--they might just as well have been sent home at the point where he took over--and within a week or ten days they were the best outfit in the theater, or at least they had that record for the next three months period after that, and continued to hold it for some time.

QUESTION: I am a little confused with this "eight times more frequently." Is that the frequency with which you try to save a man eight times where you probably should have employed firing a little

sooner? Do you mean an eight-to-one frequency of trying to save him or rehabilitate him instead of getting him out?

DR. FLANAGAN: I think we should be a little cautious in using that "eight-to-one." All I meant to say by this "eight-to-one" is that, when they were asked for incidents where they made an important mistake during the past year, they mentioned eight times as frequently that they had a man in a job that they now feel they definitely should have fired, but they procrastinated and kept him in the job longer than they should have; that they really felt now that they had the information earlier and that it cost the particular company a lot of money and trouble to hold the man in the job when they felt at the present time that the information available for his removal was there earlier.

Now, that eight times was in contrast with the selection of the right man in the job in the first place. So that eight times as often they kept him when they should not have, when their present judgment is that they made a mistake in the original selection.

Sometimes--and this is important--the error that they made most frequently, that they were most concerned about, the situation or the error that made them feel the most guilty, was not making the change sooner.

QUESTION: In your list of good points of an ideal executive you mentioned attention to detail. Isn't there a difference of opinion about whether at many levels, executives pay too much attention to

detail?

DR. FLANAGAN: I think that is a good point. I would like to clarify it.

I listed those things that I had on the list, and I guess that I didn't adequately point out the deficiencies. But there were three or four things. There were tact and diplomacy, and there was attention to detail. There were two or three other things on that list which you never heard anything more about in all the rest of the papers. In other words, these were just one man's idea of what makes a good executive, which, when you get to the incidents, just fall by the wayside.

My particular point that I am trying to make is that, if you take almost anybody's list that is just made by the armchair method, with wisdom, experience, and observation over a period of time, he will have a lot of good points in it. Any executive who has had a lot of experience will have good points in it. But he probably has seen it just from one angle, and he doesn't realize the relative importance of some of these other things. There are executives with not very much tact and diplomacy who really do achieve a remarkable record. It is easy to list some of ^{them} _^ in high places.

QUESTION: Outside of on-the-job training, do I understand from your remarks that you have found that role playing and case study methods and conferences with on-the-ground people is the best method of improving leadership traits and characteristics?

DR. FLANAGAN: That is a good question. My expert

judgment is that it is the best.

But, as far as research results are concerned, they are not available. I would say that my personal opinion is that the case conference method, and the role-playing situational test type of activity, are much more effective than other procedures. On the other hand, that is just my own personal opinion, and it is not backed up by the kind of research that it needs to have.

A few months ago we did develop a proposal to compare something more nearly like the case conference method, with a very active role-playing situation which consisted almost exclusively of role playing with pre-set materials. It was the situational test kind of thing, where there was a great deal of student activity in very small groups, with pre-set materials. We were proposing to compare that with a lot of the larger groups, with much less role playing, more demonstration, and more leader activity. We were not talking about all of the possibilities. We were talking about the fairly extreme ones. We were demonstrating and giving them the words versus a lot of activity, immediate correction, critiquing, and so on. That study didn't get to a report at this time, but I am sure that studies of this kind will be done, and that sometime we will have the answer. At the present time one just has guesses and hunches and personal opinions.

QUESTION: I probably should have listened a little more closely to you, but how do you define a critical incident? Is there a way to translate those incidents into leadership characteristics?

DR. FLANAGAN: Yes. This differs in different situations. We will take one of these military situations. The request for incidents is a question like this: "Tell me something that has happened recently, the most recent time that you have observed one of your subordinates, or your immediate subordinate, do something which interfered with the effective performance of the mission of your unit. Just what did he do, and why did this contribute to ineffectiveness in the accomplishment of your mission?" That is one side.

The other side is: "Now, would you give me the last example you can think of, of something that one of your subordinates did which contributed in a substantial way to the carrying out of your assigned mission?" It is a special plus; that is, the critical incident is ordinarily about something which made an appreciable effect on getting the job done or preventing it from getting done, making it much more difficult for the rest of the people to get the job done.

In a particular situation we might say: "Well, this has to be important enough so that it would make one hundred dollars worth of difference in production" or you might use any other sort of criterion that you want--that it would produce a complaint, or something. We try to get the really important things, which contribute either positively or negatively to carrying out the object or purpose, the assigned mission, of the group.

QUESTION: Several factors which you have mentioned seem to follow the pattern of our effectiveness reports in the military. To what

extent, if any, have you used effectiveness reports as a basis of your
conclusions? If you have/ would you care to comment upon their
validity?

DR. FLANAGAN: I might pick on the civilian personnel one
first. It is easier.

When we went into the Columbus and Lexington situations,
and
we found that the general foremen and the foremen/supervisors there
just felt that they were not really having anything to do with evaluat-
ing their people any more, because, as they explained, if you say
that a person is outstanding, you have to write a long essay justifying
it to the extent that the person is probably in line for a medal. The
person would be congratulated by the head man if you put down that
he is outstanding. On the other hand, if you put down that he is
unsatisfactory, you practically have to have a case all set to fire him.
So actually all of their ratings were in the "Satisfactory" category,
and they weren't really doing an evaluation of the people on the job.

We found also, however, that they were very much interested
and enthusiastic in using performance records, which we introduced to
them and trained them to use, to try to get a record of the performance
of their people in their jobs, which they could evaluate to help these
people improve. I think that our experience was that they felt a real
need of something that would help them develop their supervisors.

This isn't quite applicable to the military situation. The
military situation has changed a good deal. I would have to confess

that I am not intimately familiar with any of the records that you use now. I have examined all of the ones in use by the Army, the ones in use by the Navy, and the ones in use by the Air Force.

From personal conversations with some of the people in charge of developing these records, I know that some of them feel that something along the line of the performance record would be desirable; but they just don't think they could get the officers in the military to use it. We are planning an experiment this fall in getting a small group of Navy officers to keep a performance record for a two- or three-months period as a part of an experiment in evaluating these officers with which they are associated.

I gather from talking with my colleagues in the military that the efficiency reports, the effectiveness reports, the fitness reports, that are in use at the present time are much better than the ones that were in use, say, ten years ago; that they are getting a little better distribution; and that they are of some value to the boards that make promotions and other groups.

I am afraid that you had better turn to some of the other people, some of whom are in this audience, to get a good answer to that question.

QUESTION: You mentioned that one of the important functions or criteria in developing executives is ability to delegate. Delegation, as I understand it, is a means whereby an executive has somebody else do some work for him, so that he knows it is being

done. In my own case I find that I have a lot of trouble with the delegating problem. I wonder if there is a simple rule on that which I haven't yet found.

DR. FLANAGAN: The chances are that there is none. At least, I haven't found any. But that is a very important area. I had hoped that some of the other lecturers would have covered that a little bit more.

But I think that, if you go clear to the top and look at the way General Motors, General Electric, and some of the other key companies are set up, this indicates what you mean by delegating. That is, they may have a central office for personnel or a central office for management development or something else, but the head of the division runs his own show.

Now, of course, this is true of the military. The captain runs his own ship. I think that is a good example of delegated authority. People just don't get away with telling him how he is going to run it. They can tell him what to do, but they can't tell him how to run it.

That, I think, is the same way that one needs to carry on with any smaller staff. You give the authority and the responsibility to the person; but you have procedures for getting to him and evaluating, through his reports, his procedures.

For example, I might take this general that I mentioned that had this group in Sardinia. They were getting some site photographs;

but when he got this group, they didn't have adequate site photographs. Nobody paid very much attention to having site photographs collected. They were in all kinds of difficulties.

So the first thing he did was to set up an intelligence unit that got right from the groups evaluating them, how they were doing, and were they really getting the bridges or weren't they?--keeping active records on them. It didn't take very long in this case until he found this one group that just wasn't performing.

I think that you have to start with complete delegation. Then you have to have some way to find out whether they are carrying out their mission or not.

QUESTION: From what we have read and heard from other speakers I gather that one of the oldest theories is the hopelessness of using a set of adjectives to describe a leader, to use in picking him out. The theory I have picked up is that it is the interaction of a group to a certain situation that bring forth a leader. You have to change some of the characteristics of the leader as the situation changes.

I am confused about this incidents method. Is the objective of that to relate these adjectives to a group or average set of situations and emerge with a new set of super-adjectives relating to the situation?

DR. FLANAGAN: I think that is a very good question from the point of view of clarifying the distinction between sets of traits--industriousness, forcefulness, and so on--their relation to what I am talking about, which we gather through the critical incidents procedure.

The critical incidents method proposes to develop an operational definition for the effective leader in terms of what he does in a particular situation. It doesn't do it by applying over-all adjectives, but it says that in this type of situation he will perform in this way if he is an effective leader. If he is not an effective leader, he will perform in this other way.

Now, this is started by observing the leadership process and its results and saying that, if people in the leadership situation usually perform in this way, they will get bad results--interference with the accomplishment of the mission, and so forth. If they behave in this other way, they will get a good result.

Now, this "if they behave in this way" is put in quite specific terms as to specific actions under these particular circumstances. It tries to avoid getting it to the generalization level of adjectives, but to keep it in terms of things which people can be objective about, where they can see this man doing that and say, "That is ineffective."

But situations are sufficiently different that one can't be entirely objective. There has to be an element of judgment in it. You have to ask yourself: "Was this situation sufficiently similar to some other condition to show that this is not effective behavior?" I don't think we are ever going to be able to get away from human judgments of that kind. I think that there are rules that we can follow which will make them more objective. That means that several observers observing the same situation will agree that a certain kind of conduct was ineffective rather than effective.

I would like to say just one other thing to correct an impression which might perhaps arise from an interpretation of this young president's report.

Perhaps there was a little bit too much emphasis on the importance of early firing. I don't want to leave you with the impression that I feel that this is really an important and a large function of the executive. It seems to me that the opposite approach to this was that people had made errors, that they made serious errors probably in selection in the first place, although frequently one inherits some key personnel when one goes into a new job.

Their errors in development, in the second place, were that perhaps these people could be moved into positions where they would work effectively, if you really put the time on it that is needed to evaluate them.

And perhaps the most important errors were in evaluation, in the third place, because, if this president had adequately evaluated the situation at the beginning, he would have been able to take definite action, because he would have had the facts in front of him. But it usually was developing sort of gradually, and he was just gradually becoming aware of the situation, which was very important and vital to the organization; but he didn't really have confidence in his judgment, because he didn't have the facts.

So that I think that through a program of selection, evaluation, and development, including in the problem of development the proper

assignment of key personnel, and the proper structuring of their jobs, one can avoid a good deal of this situation which requires that a person be separated from his position.

CAPT MOTT: Dr. Flanagan, on behalf of the Commandant, the faculty, and the student body, we thank you for an excellent lecture. Thank you very much.

- - - - -