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## Industrial and military staff organizations.

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THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY  
School of Government

U. S. NAVY GRADUATE COMPTROLLERSHIP PROGRAM

INDUSTRIAL AND MILITARY  
STAFF ORGANIZATIONS

For  
SEMINAR IN COMPTROLLERSHIP  
DR. A. REX JOHNSON

Prepared By  
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## I. INTRODUCTION

### The Line-Staff Principle of Organization

Much has been written on the subject of staff organization in books, management magazines, industrial reports and investigations by various governmental agencies. Most of it merely repeats the basic assumptions on which a staff organization is based, using different terms or approaching the subject in a different way. Basically, however, the functions of staff organization in industrial enterprises is founded upon the staff experience of the military services. For that reason, all industrial staff organizations have a common background, and though different writers may make adaptations of the fundamentals, it is apparent that most staff organizations will have basic similarities.

The fact that staffs may have certain common characteristics in respect to functions, duties, or methods in no way is a limitation upon the organization within the individual staff. The best organization for any unit can depend, and does depend, upon a myriad of variables which must be taken into consideration in each individual case. Since a staff is designed to assist, it is obvious that the very nature of the assistance required will influence the specific staff organization. The level of industry or of the military at which the staff is



serving will also place limitations on the staff development. And a last variable, but not the least, are the personalities that make up the staff. While it is granted that a concept of organizing around available personnel is not sound, it is being done every day, and its influence upon sound organizations cannot be discounted by looking the other way.

The principle of line-staff organization, upon which the concept of a staff is based, is not an item of discussion in this paper. It is assumed that this form of industrial and military organization is an accepted fact; that it is the most effective form of organization for large combinations. Although certain principles of this type of organization will be mentioned in any discussion of the staff portion, it is not considered necessary herein to justify all the principles nor to explain the advantages of line-staff organization over the pure line or the pure functional combination. However, a brief explanation is in order here.

As one writer on the subject states:

"Under the Line and Staff principle of operations, the management has a means to delegate a large measure of responsibility and authority for administration to his Line Officers in the field, and it also provides him with a mechanism through which he may delegate a large measure of his responsibility for planning and results control to the Staff Officers by his side."<sup>1</sup>

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J. Fisher, Discussion of the Line and Staff Principle of Organization (Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania: United States Steel Corporation, February, 1950)



The above article indicates that the line officers still have responsibility, and these relations will be discussed further in another section of the paper. In order to clarify the position of the staff department in the line-staff organization note the following definition from "The Management Dictionary";

"Staff Department: A department responsible for the development of policies and methods for the performance of its specialized functions under the immediate direction of the staff executive in charge of the department, and which cannot apply its plans, policies, or methods directly to line units, but rather must obtain approval to do its work through the superior administrative executives."<sup>1</sup>

This paper, then, will discuss some of the principles of staff organization and use in military services and in industrial enterprises, endeavoring to synthesize the writings of various authors on the subject by presenting the opinions of some contemporary writers which express the majority view. In the military services, naturally, the books on the subject represent official doctrine, and since there can be only one doctrine for the fundamentals of staff organization within a service, there is little if any divergence of opinion in basic concepts. These can be found in official Navy and Army publications, and in writings on the subject by military authors. Most writings, however, are confined to aspects of organization within a staff, since for reasons mentioned before, this aspect of a staff can vary any place. The basic concepts are well covered in official

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<sup>1</sup>A. E. Benn, The Management Dictionary (New York: Exposition Press, 1952)



documents. The written material on staff concepts in industry are not so well defined and there are unlimited sources of reference.

This brief inspection of the line-staff principle will be examined in more detail in later pages.

### History of Staff Development

The background of staff development is naturally associated with military services. The first record of a military staff dates back to 1600 B.C. and Thothmes I, Pharaoh of Egypt. While details of this staff are not clear it is known that as early as 500 B. C. the armies of Egypt and Syria were using staff including sections for Intelligence, Administration, Logistics, and Engineering. Many of the writers on this subject have turned to the Bible for reference, turning to the Book of Exodus, 18th Chapter. Here, Jethro, as the staff, advises Moses to delegate responsibility and authority to "able men" and to delineate their functions and responsibilities. "Moreover thou shalt provide out of all people able men . . . and let them judge the people at all seasons."

Gustavus Adolphus of Sweden is generally recognized as father of modern warfare. His staff system developed in the first part of the seventeenth century, served as a model for European and British staffs which followed.

Staff systems in the United States had their beginning with General Washington in 1775. Since that time the Army general staff system has been discussed pro and con by the Army and Congress.



and was eventually codified by legislation in 1903, 1921, and 1950. As an insight into the importance which Congress attached to the staff system of the Army there is the following report of the House Military Affairs Committee, John Coburn, Chairman, in February, 1873.

"To adjust and perfect the subtle and intricate machinery by which great masses of soldiers are to be fed, clothed, armed, moved, inspired, with confidence, and carried through victorious battles, is, after all, wrapped up in the perfection of the staff organization. Take the best field officers, take the best drilled soldiers, take a good cause, take all natural advantages of situation, and take away from the general the independent aid he must have in an efficient staff, and neither courage, good conduct, nor skill in the line can redeem a large army from the character of a mob."<sup>1</sup>

As might be expected, most of the arguments over the Army General Staff Corps arose over the questions of money to support such an organization in peace time. The history of this country until recent years has been marked by an extreme reluctance to support an army except when actually engaged in fighting. However, in 1949 two contemporary writers had essentially the same thing to say as John Coburn in 1873.

"The major function of the staff organization of a military unit, therefore, is twofold: (1) without this support it would be impossible for combat troops to successfully engage an enemy, (2) with staff assistance the commanding general's span of knowledge is extended so that he may comprehend every aspect of his command whether the prevailing circumstances are the normal ones of peacetime or the complicated ones of battle."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Military Affairs, The Staff Departments of the U. S. Army, A compilation of hearings on this subject compiled by Herman D. Reeve, Clerk of the Committee (Government Printing Office, 1900)

<sup>2</sup>Elmore Peterson and E. B. Plowman, Business Organization and Management (New York: Richard D. Irwin Inc., 1949)



The historical development of military staffs has culminated in two somewhat different organizations as used by the Navy and Army. The Air Force staff is essentially a copy of that used by the Army with different terms substituted. Although the staff organization is somewhat different, the basic staff functions and methods are similar as will be illustrated. The basic organizational differences resolve themselves into the Army general-special staff and the Navy integrated staff.



## II. MILITARY STAFF CONCEPTS

### U. S. Navy

In military parlance the reason a staff is organized and what they are supposed to do is referred to as mission and function. The mission of the naval staff as defined in one publication is:

"To assist the Commander in the discharge of his command functions."<sup>1</sup>

In this same publication are listed the functions of the staff which will enable the staff to assist the Commander. They are:

1. Gather and evaluate detailed and accurate information in order to advise the Commander on all phases of the existing situation.
2. Develop policies and prepare plans, schedules, and directives for the Commander based on higher directives.
3. Disseminate information and directives to subordinate commanders and information and reports to higher authority in order to assist the Commander."<sup>2</sup>

Within the framework of this broad mission and functions the Navy staffs operate. However, as mentioned earlier, the specific organization which these staffs may take varies considerably from one level to another and from one activity to another. As it might be imagined, certain broad principles of organization have been evolved to assist commanders in establishing the most

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Naval War College, Principles of Naval Staff Organization

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.



appropriate staff for their particular commands. These principles are not native to Navy staffs but can apply to other military and industrial units as well. These principles are:

- "1. Every necessary function in assisting the Commander should be assigned to a staff unit.
2. The functions assigned to a staff member should be clear cut and understood. It is a responsibility of the Commander that this is done, and of the staff to comply.
3. Staff personnel should report to but one superior.
4. Functional duty should be assigned to but one superior.
5. Responsibility to perform a given function must be matched with authority.
6. The Chief of Staff must exercise control and coordination of staff activities.
7. The composition of the staff should never be permitted to grow so elaborate as to hinder work accomplishment.
8. The staff should be organized to assure proper coordination of related work between Commander, staff, and other units of the command."<sup>1</sup>

These broad organizational principles, which were introduced because of their applicability to many situations, are applied by the Commanders in organizing the staff. But the specific composition of the staff depends on the current situation in many cases, especially the staffs of the operating forces, as contrasted to the more permanent installations ashore. In these cases the principles above are applied to an analysis of the current situation requiring a staff. This procedure is outlined in another Naval publication.

"Since it is the function of the staff to assist the Commander in exercise of command its composition, organization, assignments or duties and procedures must be appropriate to:

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<sup>1</sup>Ibid.



- (a) Responsibility of the Commander (i.e. major tasks assigned)
- (b) Size and complexity of the command
- (c) Nature of current and contemplated operations
- (d) Relative importance of operational and administrative activities
- (e) Facilities (office space, communications, etc.)"<sup>1</sup>

From a reexamination of the above it can be seen that the mission and functions of all Navy staffs will be essentially the same. That is to assist the Commander by the performance of certain broad functions. Further in organizing his staff to perform these functions the Commander has certain principles which are applied to insure that the functions will be performed efficiently, with a maximum degree of coordination and a minimum degree of duplication and confusion. And, lastly, each Commander, in the composition of his particular staff, must make some analysis of the specific nature of the assistance he will require which results, in effect, in a group of principles of "staff composition," to be used as a guide.

In the Navy application of the principles results in one integrated staff unit which performs virtually the same functions and duties of the Army general and special staffs. Generally, the space limitations aboard naval ships has precluded any extensive staff development, which is one reason for the adoption of an integrated staff organization.

Within the organization certain relations exist between the Commander, the staff, and subordinate commanders. They are listed as follows:

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Naval War College, Staff Systems (October, 1931)



"1. Staff personnel are solely assistants to the Commander. All their authority flows from him and must be exercised in his name.

2. Certain authority may be delegated to officers of the staff. This delegation of authority does not include surrender of responsibility.

3. Within the scope of such authority officers of the staff supervise the execution of plans and orders and take such action as is necessary to carry out the Commander's policies. It may be necessary to deal directly with commanders of subordinate units, but policy decisions must be cleared with the Commander."<sup>1</sup>

These aspects of staff relations repeat, in effect, the earlier statements in respect to line-staff organization. The Commander retains responsibility, the staff assists but has no authority of its own except as expressly stated by the Commander. The dictionary definition of a staff, already stated, presents this same concept as it applies to industry. A sample chart of the organization of a typical operating naval staff showing the usual sections employed follows this page.

The Staff system in the U. S. Army is characterized by the concept of the general staff and the special staff, which combined render approximately the same services as the Navy integrated staff. The exception being the fact that special staff officers may be in command of troops furnishing specialized services such as communications. In writing about the development of the general staff one writer made the following comment:

"An analysis of the development of the general staff leads to the inevitable conclusion that there would be no need for its existence if it were physically possible for a Commander to perform personally the military

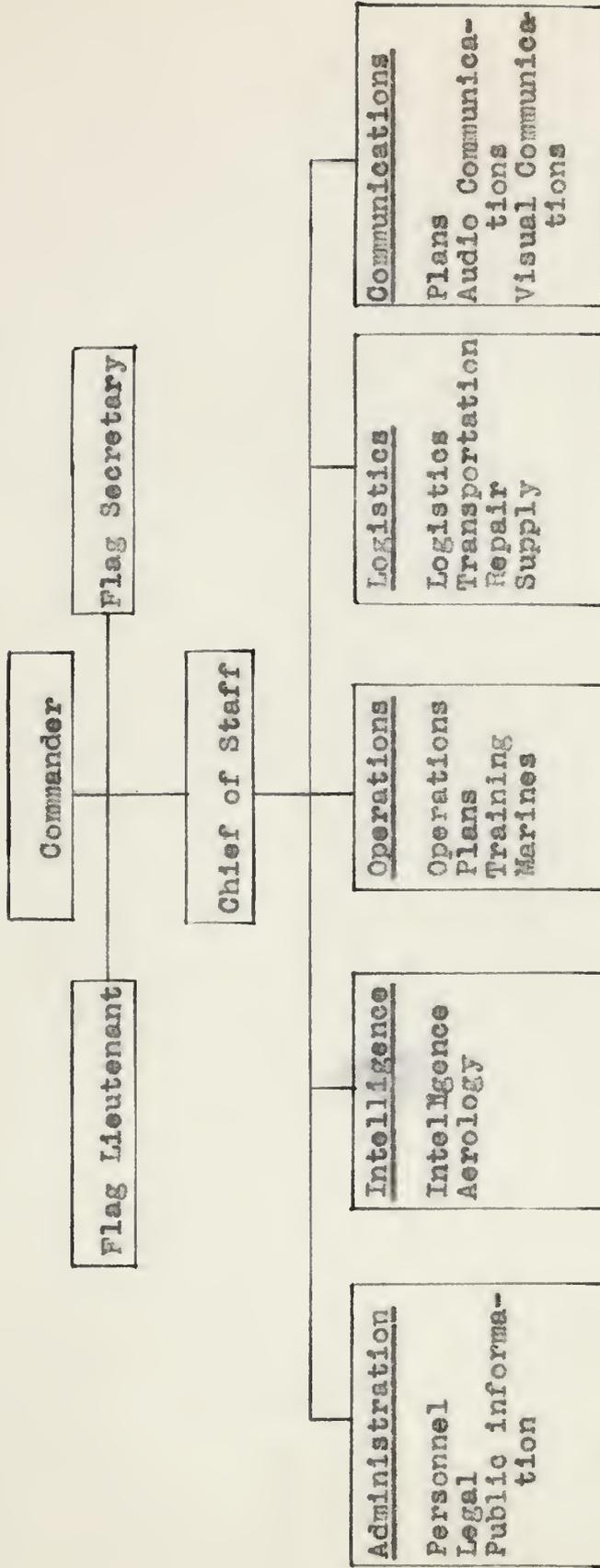
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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Naval War College, op. cit.



FIGURE 1

INTEGRATED NAVAL STAFF





management functions of planning, organizing, commanding and controlling."<sup>1</sup>

This comment is presented in order to explain that the term "general" refers to the fact that the staff deals in all general matters of the command in which the Commander is interested, and does not refer to the Army rank structure. In comparison, the special staff is concerned with certain functional specialties.

According to the General Staff Officers' Manual:

"General Staff Group--organized so as to include all functions of Command and composed of officers of the General Staff Corps and officers detailed as assistants.

Special Staff Group--consists of all staff officers assigned, attached, or who have duties at headquarters but not in the general staff. It includes technical specialists and heads of technical services."<sup>2</sup>

These definitions explain the personnel who make up the different staffs, but a clearer picture of the distinctions of the two can best be gotten by a brief summary of their respective functions.

1. General staff sections are usually G-1 Personnel, G-2 Intelligence, G-3 Operations, G-4 Logistics. General staff officers advise the Commander, translate his decisions into plans, write directives, transmit directives to subordinates for execution of orders, recommends revisions to current directives. In short, the general staff extends the Commander's capabilities, thereby making it possible for one man to employ all the forces under his command in the most effective manner.

2. Special staff is composed of officers representing specialized activities such as Engineer, Finance, Communications, Artillery. It is commanded by the commanding officer and its functions are coordinated by the general staff. It assists the general staff in planning and in coordination of their particular technical or administrative specialties. They exercise technical supervision of corresponding staff

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<sup>1</sup> John Robert Beishline, Military Management for National Defense (New York: Prentice Hall Company, 1950)

<sup>2</sup> U. S. Army, General Staff Officers' Manual



sections and activities of subordinate units and establish liaison with higher staffs."<sup>1</sup>

The mission and functions of these staffs is not too unlike that of the Navy staff and a repetition here would not reveal any new functions. As mentioned before, the only difference is that in the Navy staff the general and technical advisory services are combined. In the matter of relationships of staff to line officers arising out of the performance of these functions, however, the Army publications are quite explicit in making these relationships clear.

"A staff officer as such has no authority to command. All policies, decisions, and plans whether originating with the Commander or with the staff must be authorized by the Commander before they are put into effect. When a staff officer by virtue of delegated authority issues an order in the name of the Commander, responsibility remains with the Commander even though he may not know of the order."<sup>2</sup>

And so that a staff officer may know the limits of his authority in respect to the important function of supervision the same reference makes these instructions:

"Staff supervision is the process of advising other staff officers and individuals subordinate to the Commander of the Commander's plans and policies, interpreting those plans and policies, assisting such subordinates in carrying them out, determining the extent to which they are being followed, and advising the Commander thereof."<sup>3</sup>

In respect to the composition of the Army staff, it will be remembered that Navy staffs were composed after analysis of

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Naval War College, Staff Systems (October, 1952)

<sup>2</sup>U. S. Army, Staff Officers' Field Manual

<sup>3</sup>Ibid.



situations confronting the Commander. However, experience has shown that Army Commanders are usually faced with similar problems and the G-1 through 4 sections encompassing Personnel, Intelligence, Operations and Logistics has historically proved satisfactory. This had an added advantage of easy liaison since staffs at all levels are organized the same way throughout the Army. Recently, however, additional problems facing Army Commanders has introduced a fifth section which may vary somewhat in different commands. A sample Army staff organization chart follows this page.

#### The Chief of Staff

A staff position that thus far is unique to military staff systems is the position of the Chief of Staff. His duties in an Army or in a Navy staff are practically identical. The position of the Chief of Staff is well defined by the military and all officers recognize the responsible position which he holds. The way in which one service publication defines the position and duties is stated below.

"The Chief of Staff is the principal staff officer assistant and advisor to the Commander. He is the primary coordination agency of the command. His authority is delegated to him by the Commander. All officers of the staff (general and special) are subject to his orders in matters pertaining to staff duties.

The Chief of Staff is responsible to the Commander for ensuring that the organization, administration, training, and operation of all activities of the command are carried out in accordance with the policies and plans of the Commander or higher authority.

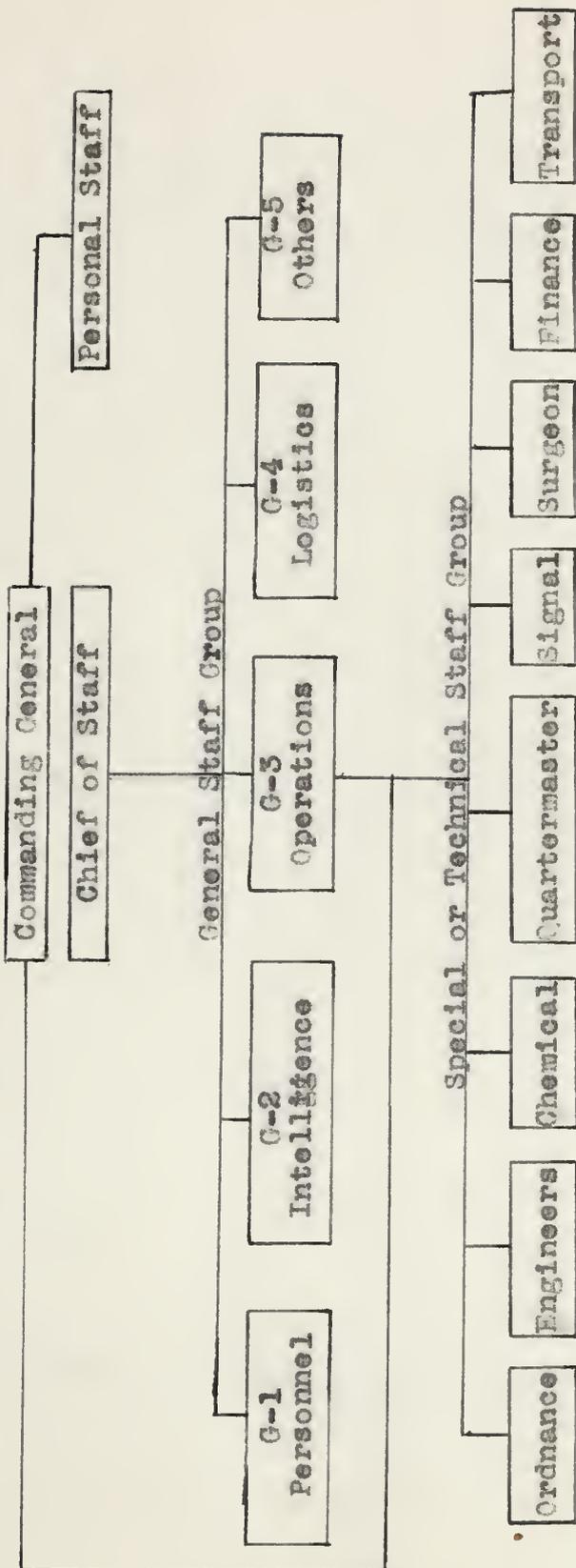
#### Duties:

1. Formulates and announces policies for the general operation of the staff.



FIGURE 2

ARMY STAFF ORGANIZATION





2. Directs and coordinates the work of the staff within the Command and with other staffs and commands.

3. Keeps the Commander informed on all matters relating to the command, advises the Commander on policy.

4. Represents the Commander during his temporary absences or when authorized to do so.

5. Coordinates and allots the work of the staff in preparing plans and orders, submitting final draft to the Commander for approval.

6. By personal observation and with assistance of staff, sees that the orders and instructions of the Commander are executed.

7. Makes a continuous study of the situation with a view to being prepared for future contingencies.

8. Requires all staff officers to inform him of information given or instructions received as a result of direct contact with the Commander.

9. Establishes liaison with adjacent, higher, subordinate and supported units; controls liaison personnel and activities."<sup>1</sup>

It should be explained that the Chief of Staff has no line authority over subordinate commanders but bears the same relationship to them as do other staff officers as already discussed. He can be considered as the directing head of the staff over which he may be considered to have limited line authority in matters pertaining to staff functions. There is no Chief of Staff position as such in industrial staff organizations although some of his duties may be performed by one of the executive officers of the company or an executive assistant.

#### General Military Staff Principles

In concluding a discussion of military staff systems, there are a few principles or elements of these systems which have not been mentioned heretofore. However, they are of

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<sup>1</sup>U. S. Naval War College, Principles of Naval Staff Organization



importance because of their widespread application and adaptation possibilities by staff organizations in industrial enterprises. They will be touched on briefly here.

The need for flexibility in the organization of military staffs cannot be over-emphasized. Staff organization cannot long remain static in face of changing functions and still effectively serve the Commander. When new missions are assigned, new functions may appear, and corresponding adjustments in staff organization become necessary. Achieving this flexibility is a responsibility of the Commander, who is most cognizant of changes in the problems and tasks confronting him.

The work of the staff in military language is referred to as "staff action." A description of the characteristics of good staff work is found in the General Officers' Staff Manual.

"Staff action must be characterized by soundness, timeliness, and completeness. Soundness is secured through training, experience and judgment of staff officers. Timeliness results from quick, efficient work, anticipatory planning and good judgment. Completeness is secured when staff officers present plans and proposals which have been fully coordinated with all agencies vitally concerned and are in such form that the Commander can take final action to approve or disapprove the proposal and simultaneously initiate the action necessary."<sup>1</sup>

It would appear that a group of supermen would have to be assembled to achieve these results. However, the characteristics of good staff officers are not infrequently found in the military. They require the personal qualities of loyalty, energy, health, initiative, good judgment and above all tact in dealing with subordinate line officers during supervisory functions. A

<sup>1</sup>U. S. Army, General Staff Officers' Manual



friendly spirit of cooperation is essential in this regard as well as consideration of the views of other persons.

Overstaffing is an evil that besets many organizations, and this tendency should be carefully avoided. It must be remembered that the structure of a staff is dependent upon the mission and the tasks facing the command. The functions of the staff should be divided up among the various sections, care being taken that one function is not assigned to more than one section, and that only functions contributing to the success of the command are assigned. This tendency to overstaff or "empire building" is the main factor working against effective staff action as described above.



### III. INDUSTRIAL STAFF CONCEPTS

#### The Staff Assistant

Probably the first evolutionary unit in the development of industry staffs is the staff assistant or "assistant to" as he is called by some writers. This latter appellation is to distinguish him from an assistant in the line chain of command. Staff assistants may assist an executive in a capacity similar to an entire staff or he may be a special assistant in some particular specialty. In this latter case as a business develops he may end up heading a separate staff section. In the former case he may be the forerunner of a complete staff system, with assistants becoming heads of staff departments.

In most cases, however, "executive assistants are not functional experts. They assist executives in handling details of their work."<sup>1</sup> The experience gained in this capacity is often invaluable in training personnel to assume the duties of the executive which is not the situation with a staff officer. In his book on organization, Alvin Brown describes the assistant:

"In order to extend his capacity, a principal delegates portions of his responsibility. He may engage an assistant who will assist him in the performance of some delimited area thereof. It is the principal's intention that the

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<sup>1</sup>L. P. Alford and H. R. Beatty, Principles of Industrial Management (New York: Ronald Press Company, 1951)



obligations of others (subordinates) shall run direct to himself (not via the assistant).

The principal having two areas of action, an assistant may assist him in two ways: in the performance of his reserved responsibility, or in the exercise of supervision, or both.<sup>1</sup>

Thus it appears that the "assistant to" participates in the responsibilities of his executive superior but no responsibilities are delegated to him as might be the case to a deputy. General Eisenhower has stressed the opinion that "business men made too little use of the staff assistant." He reported that his own practice was to have at least four or five such assistants, able men, closely trained by him and completely familiar with his decision-making habits.<sup>2</sup>

A list of the duties that a staff assistant might perform would include the following:

1. Research, analysis, and writing of policies, plans and procedures.
2. Study of market condition, competition, government regulations affecting the business.
3. Coordination between staff departments in large companies.
4. Design and study of management control reports.
5. Preparation of organization manuals and charts.
6. Part-time functions such as public relations, screening visitors, etc.
7. Supervision.

These duties would follow from the concept that the assistant is an extension of the executive's personality, that he has no authority

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<sup>1</sup> Alvin Brown, Organization, A Formulation of Principle (New York: Hibbert Printing Company, 1945)

<sup>2</sup> Ernest Dale, Planning and Developing the Company Organization Structure (New York: The American Management Ass'n., 1952)



to act in his own name but only in the name of his chief, and that he is junior to the line executives with whom he must work. Needless to say, tact and diplomacy must be features of his daily routine, in his capacity of a one man staff.

### The Industrial Staff

Before discussing the concepts of staff organization and use in industrial firms a brief summary of the line-staff principle of organization is in order. Understanding this form of organization is vital in making a staff system work and is the source of most trouble in industry. The military has little or no difficulty with the line-staff concept. Upon this concept are based the fundamental relations between line officers and staff officers which can so often be a source of friction. An article in Advanced Management states:

"In the line and staff organization, the staff is attached to the line at any level in order to assist the line. The executives are responsible for all aspects of line operations, but may be unable to become familiar with all the aspects. The various staff departments concentrate on parts of the lines' total duties so as to advise and assist the line in discharge of greater responsibility. The staff reduces the line executive's problems of span of control, span of attention,<sup>1</sup> span of personality, span of mental and physical effort."<sup>1</sup>

In summary then, the line has responsibility and command of operations. The staff can be looked upon as the men who at the direction of the executive line head, will study and analyze problems, develop plans, and recommend policies so the executive head may have before him all of the facts

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<sup>1</sup>William R. Spriegel and Joseph K. Bailey, The Staff Function in Organization (Advanced Management, March, 1952)

The first part of the report is devoted to a general survey of the situation in the country. It is followed by a detailed account of the work done during the year. The report concludes with a summary of the results and a list of references.

General survey of the situation

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and opinions upon which to base his operating decisions.

The functions that the staff assumes are largely outgrowths of managerial functions that were originally located in the line. Accordingly a staff function can be appended to the line at any command level. It is the same situation as staff service in the Army. If the Commander or line executive were able himself to study out every problem, investigate personally every decision that had to be made in every specialized field, and himself direct and supervise every detail of his command or business, then there would be no need for a staff. Obviously this is impossible. In the growth of business into large complex corporate structures the development of a staff organization has been a necessary adjunct to effective executive administration.

The mission and functions of staffs in industry, although couched in somewhat different terms are essentially the same. The mission is still to assist the line executives. In the matter of functions there might be a distinction according to the type of service the staff is rendering such as general planning or a technical function. In any event the following list of abbreviated functions developed by one writer covers nearly every situation:

- "1. Management planning and policy making.
2. Organization planning.
3. Coordination and supervision.
4. Management control reports.
5. Design and installation of procedures and methods.
6. Operator participation work improvement programs.
7. Administrative controls.
8. Departmental operations audits and investigations.
9. Administrative issuances, edit, revise, and issue directives and manuals.



10. Special and technical problems.
11. Management research."<sup>1</sup>

The level of management at which any specific staff is operating will, of course, determine the extent of specialized detail involved in some of these functions, and will affect the order of their priority of duty. In a large company for example special and technical problems would be of great importance at the factory level, while for top management control, reports would be important and the technical problems would probably be factors in planning and policy making. As mentioned, staffs can be attached to the line at any level and obviously, all these functions are not performed at every level. In contrast, in a military staff, one set of functions covers the situation at all levels.

While staff functions may not be as clearly defined as some departments such as manufacturing or sales, it is in the matter of relationship of line and staff officers in discharging their various responsibilities that most difficulties arise. In the matter of responsibility J. K. Loudon states:

"Fundamentally the line is responsible for end results, and the staff is responsible for adequacy of the program for that function assigned to it, the adequacy of the methods and procedures for conducting that function, the quality of the service it renders line departments through assistance and advice, and the evaluation of the efficiency of the line operation in light of the particular function's stated and mutually agreed upon objectives."<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> E. W. Reilly, "Why Short Change the Chief Executive on Staff Assistance?", Personnel Magazine (September, 1947)

<sup>2</sup> J. K. Loudon, "Line and Staff--Their Roles in Organization Structure", Advanced Management (June, 1949)



The above and the writings of other authors clearly define the responsibility and authority of the line officers and the responsibility of the staff departments, but it is in the matter of staff authority that difficulties arise. Without any line authority, how can the staff accomplish all these functions? Is their responsibility discharged by advising the line executive? In most cases the answer is NO. In the functions of supervision and coordination, for example, and to a lesser degree in planning, it is necessary to exert the authority of their ideas without any special delegated authority to do so. Ernest Dale has submitted a list of staff methods of exerting some authority which is representative of most opinion.

"1. Through superior articulation. Staff men must be more articulate and skilled in persuading others to accept their ideas. Get line executives to accept ideas by argument and negotiation rather than by forcing authority. Use informal approach, tact, and diplomacy.

2. Through technical competence. Staff specialist has technical skills and knowledge not possessed by the line, his advice, like legal counsel, may have to be accepted.

3. Through status. Many staff specialists are considerably higher in the management hierarchy and in salary scale than the executive they advise and are able to obtain acceptance on that account.

4. Through sanctions. Staff sanctions may be so influential as to lead to demotion or removal or opponents.

5. By default. Line executives may depend on staff specialists to reach decisions they are unable to make themselves."<sup>1</sup>

By studying this list it becomes apparent that, assuming technical competence, the human relations aspect in line-staff interaction is most important. Fact, diplomacy, persuasion seem to

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<sup>1</sup>  
Dale, op. cit.



crop up in any discussion of staff organization. In addition it is necessary that line officers be educated to use staff services and this, of course, requires that top management give its support to the staff organization. Whatever authority the staff departments exert must be done with care, and disputes that cannot be avoided should be referred to superior line executives for decision.

Because staff organizations in individual businesses do not have the well defined doctrines to guide them as do the military services, there are certain common pitfalls or errors that may beset them. These may be mistakes of staff organization, of staff action, of the position of staff within the business, and of human relations. Below are enumerated a few of these pitfalls.

1. Staff advice may be confused with an order.
2. Line officer may lean too heavily on staff and thus weaken his position and organization.
3. Strong line officers may not use services of staff thus causing latter to weaken.
4. Line executive fails to define for staff the functions they are to perform, performance standards, and results desired from staff.
5. Staff not responsible for results, and may rely on line officers to catch defects.
6. Staff officers, with desire to exercise authority instead of using persuasion."<sup>1</sup>
7. "Attempting to bolster a weak line organization by increasing staff functions."<sup>2</sup>
8. "Improper determination of the management level and executive position to which staff should logically report.
9. Staff should be free of departmental obligation, influence or bias, should be able to take broad viewpoint."<sup>3</sup>
10. "Staff divisions cost money in terms of salaries, office space, etc. The operations of such departments tends to become a fixed overhead expense item."<sup>4</sup>

Most of these pitfalls can be avoided if the line officers remember that theirs is the final responsibility for keeping the line ~~and staff~~ organization in a balanced relationship.

<sup>1</sup>Spriegel and Bailey, op. cit.

<sup>2</sup>Louden, op. cit.

<sup>3</sup>P. E. Holden, L. S. Fish, and H. L. Smith, Top Management Organization and Control (Stanford University Press, 1941)

<sup>4</sup>William H. Newman, Administrative Action (New York: Prentice hall Company, 1951)



### Corporation Examples

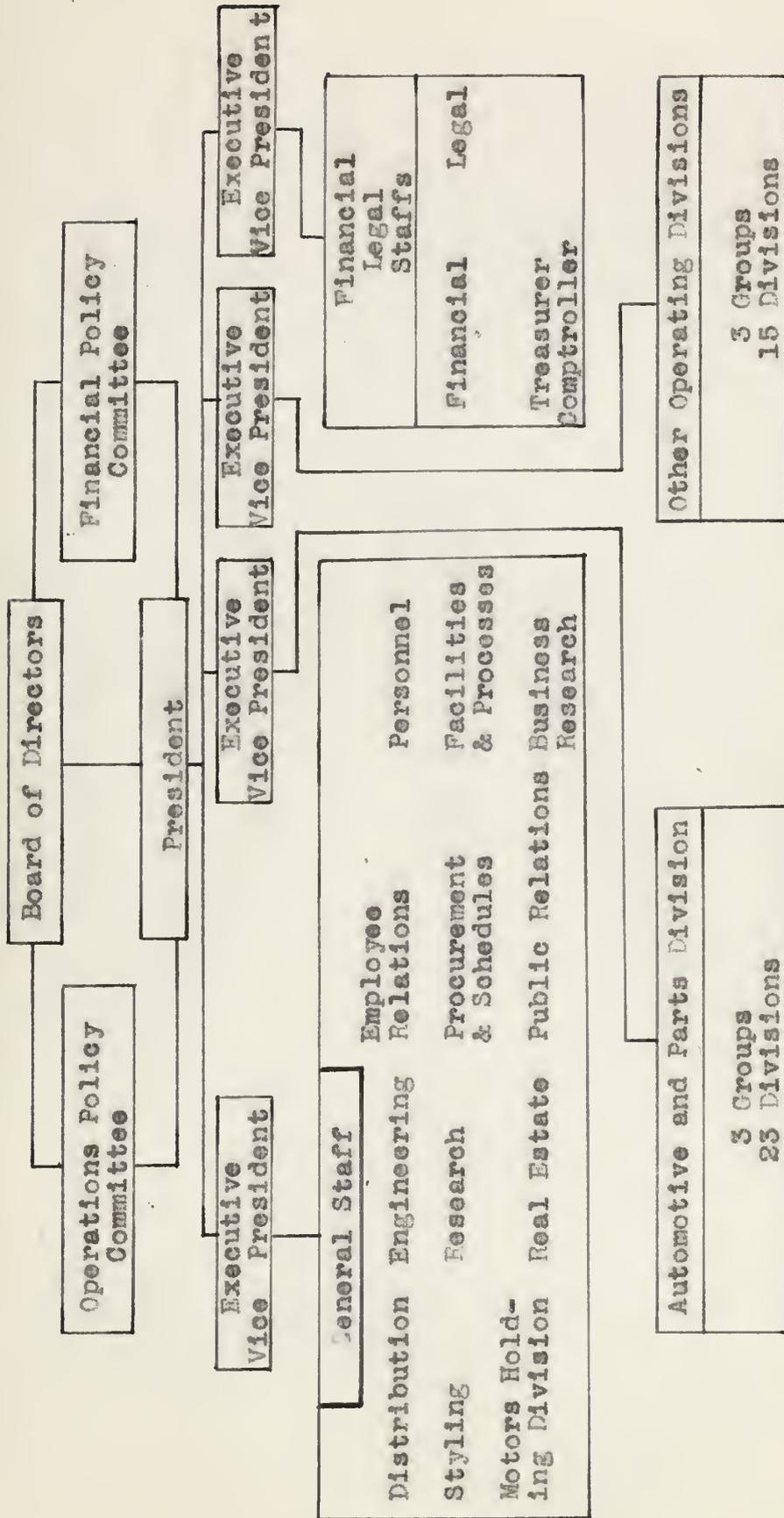
The staff organization of the General Motors Corporation, one of the largest industrial combinations in the world, uses the staff organization in various levels of the company. Each of the forty-eight separate divisions of General Motors designs, develops, manufactures, merchandises and advertises its own products, as well as hiring and training employees, and has its own staff organization to assist in these functions. Among the separate divisions are Buick, Chevrolet, Allison, Frigidaire, etc. Although these divisions are autonomous to a degree they have the resources of the corporation as well as the central office staff facilities to assist them.

In respect to the central staff facilities and organization which are shown on the chart following this page, there are two divisions called the "General Staff" and the "Financial and Legal Staff". Actually, considering the general staff and special staff concept as defined by the Army it is apparent that the two General Motors staffs are actually special staffs. They are concerned with functional specialties and not with the overall problems of the chief executive. Each section is headed by an executive, usually a vice president, who serves an advisory capacity to both operating division managers and corporation executives. General staff activities, by military standards, are more closely akin to the functions of the Operations Policy Committee, whose membership is made up of corporation executives including heads of staff



FIGURE 3

GENERAL MOTORS CORPORATION<sup>1</sup>

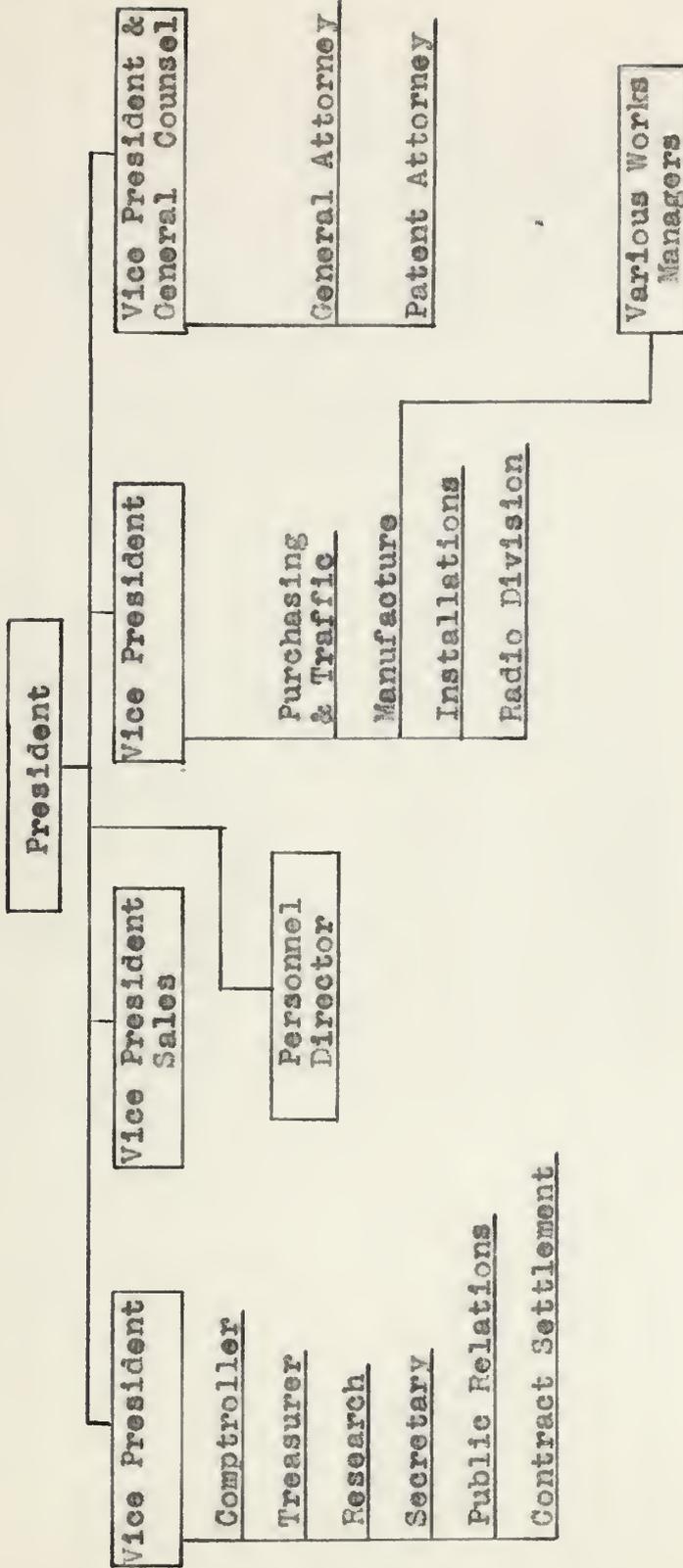


<sup>1</sup>General Motors and Its People, An American Industrial Team. (Detroit, Mich: General Motors Co., February, 1949)



FIGURE 4

WESTERN ELECTRIC CO.<sup>1</sup>



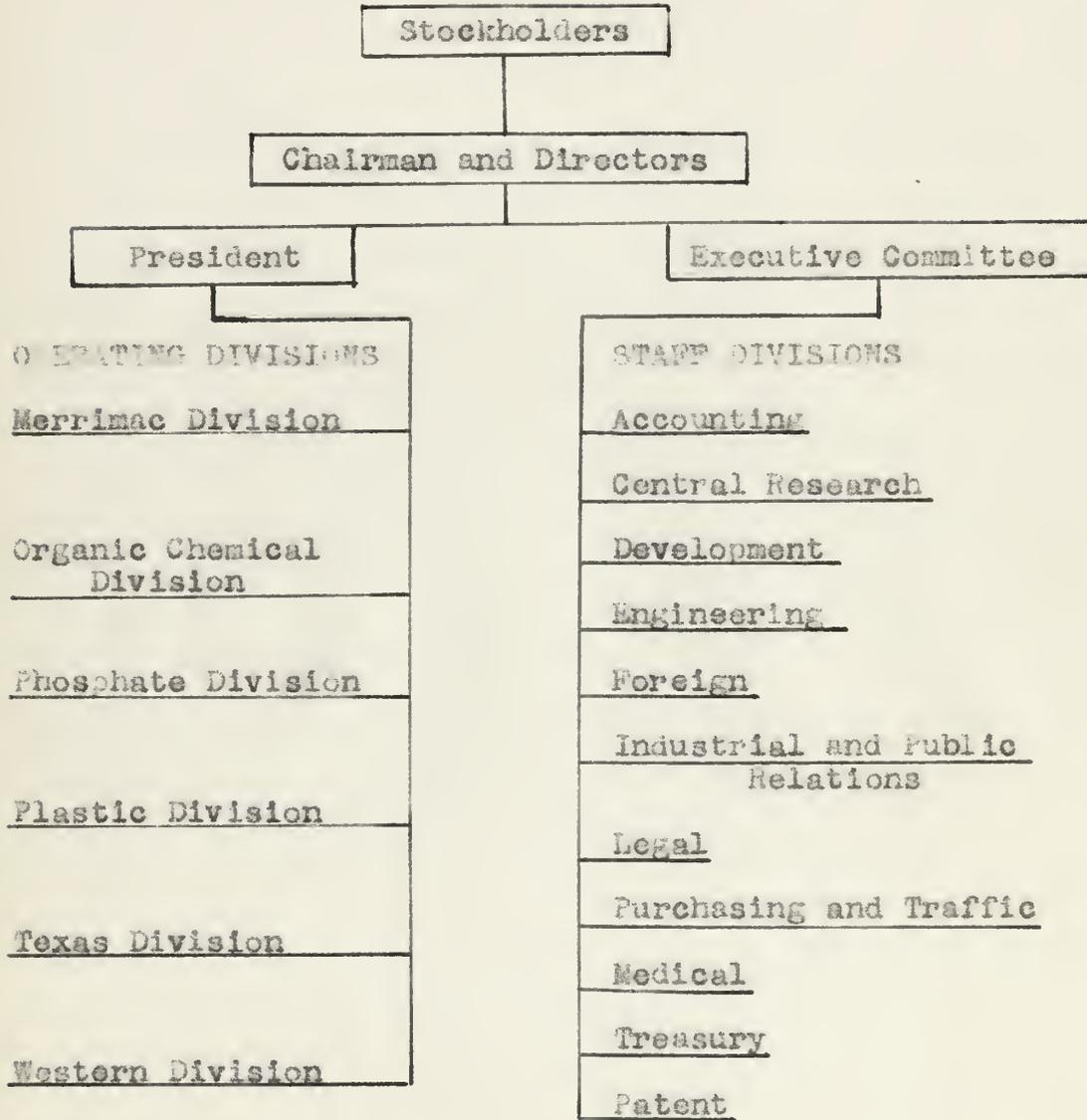
<sup>1</sup> Policyholders Service Bureau of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Co.,  
Business Organization. (New York: June, 1947)



FIGURE 5

MONSANTO CHEMICAL CORPORATION

1



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1 Policyholders Service Bureau of the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Business Organization. (New York: June, 1947)



departments. This committee is broken down into eleven policy groups which resemble staff departments in their function of policy recommendations.<sup>1</sup>

The E. I. DuPont DeNemours Company is similar to General Motors in that it has its operations divided into fairly independent departments, ten of them, based on products manufactured. Their central company organization included an Executive Committee which closely resembles a military general staff. As a committee the group is a policy making body as well as a supervisory body. It supervises and coordinates the activities of the operating departments, passes on general policies and projects proposed by the departments, and endeavors to keep the whole organization coordinated and in proper balance. The president of the company is the chairman of this committee. Supplementing the executive committee there are fourteen staff departments, headed up by directors who report to the committee and to the president. These staff departments are designed to assist the manufacturing departments in their problems, to conduct independent studies which may be of value to any one department or to the entire company, and to augment the staffs of the manufacturing departments.<sup>2</sup>

Following the General Motors organization chart there are two other charts which are included to give representative viewpoints on how the top management levels are organized to include

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<sup>1</sup>General Motors and Its People, An American Industrial Team (Detroit, Michigan: General Motors Company, February, 1949)

<sup>2</sup>Memorandum on the Organization of the DuPont Company,  
A mimeographed report by the E. I. DuPont DeNemours Company,  
September, 1950.



staff sections. It is to be noted that in each of these examples where the staff departments are fairly numerous, there is a vice president in charge of several staffs. This vice president is the industry counterpart of the Chief of Staff in military organizations, and his functions in coordinating the efforts of the various sections are similar to those of the Chief of Staff. Also it is noted the recurrence of similar staff sections in each of the companies.

In a research study conducted at Stanford University it was found that out of twenty-six corporations studied the number of staff departments ranged from eight to twenty-six. All told more than fifty different staff agencies were found. The extent to which these companies have specialized agencies to handle the more common staff functions is indicated as follows:<sup>1</sup>

Staff Agency	Number of Companies
Accounting	26
Purchasing	26
Traffic	26
Product or Process Research	24
General Engineering	24
Credit	23
Tax	23
Personnel Relations	22
Legal	21
Patent	20
Insurance	18
Budgetary Control	16
Cost Control or Industrial Engineering	13
Order and Distribution	13
Public Relations	13
Market Research	9
Real Estate	9
Economics or Statistics	8
Organization	4
Merchandise	4

<sup>1</sup>Holden, Fish, and Smith, op. cit.



This table gives some idea of the relative importance attached to various staff functions. It is interesting to note the importance attached to the Tax function by these companies in contrast to activities such as Budgetary Control and Statistics. Possibly it indicates taxes are so great an item of expense that more money can be saved by their careful study than by budgets and business statistics.



#### IV. SUMMARY

In summarizing this discussion of military and industrial staffs it is appropriate to repeat once more the staff concept as it applies to these two organizations.

"The staff officers of a military unit and the staff executives of a business concern are identical in principal and purpose. That is to say, the members of both groups are specialists who occupy positions which are so designed that they may give aid and advice to superiors in important technical matters relating to policies, strategy, and procedure. They issue no orders... From them suggestions move up to superior officers in whom rests power to transform such suggestions into orders which in turn flow down through the line."<sup>1</sup>

Although this concept is similar for both instances there are some marked differences.

In the military services the position of the staff is well defined by official regulations and through long usage. Its value has been recognized over hundreds of years, has been the subject of considerable study, and has been tested under the discerning conditions of combat. There is seldom any misunderstanding among staff and line officers relative to the authority and responsibility of each. Undoubtedly the structure of rank in the military service is a factor in keeping these relationships straight. In addition, military officer, through years of training and experience, realize quite clearly the limits of their own

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<sup>1</sup>Peterson and Plowman, op. cit.



authority and just as clearly know who is their immediate superior in the chain of command.

In industry, however, these differences are not so clearly defined. The concept of a staff, its position in an organization, and the limits of authority and responsibility of staff officers, and in some cases even line officers are not codified as they are in the military. Neither is there a long background of staff experience to draw upon, nor have the individual staff and line officers been long trained to recognize the position of each other. Friction, jealousy, lack of mutual understanding and other outgrowths of unsound or vague delimitations of functions, responsibilities, and authority crop up to plague industrial staff organizations. It is true that the organizational problems in various industries may differ, but a sound treatise on staffs to which all industry could refer for answers is much to be desired.

The problem of human relations is still probably the most important aspect in the smooth interworking of staff and line. There is no easy answer to this problem, in fact there is no final solution. Human emotions and reactions defy prediction. It does seem, though, that the burden of harmonious action rests on the staff officers. Line officers give orders and they are followed. Staff officers have no such authority and must persuade and convince by diplomatic action. Once industrial line officers are convinced of the value of staff services, as is the case in the military services, this burden of the staff officers will be considerably lessened.



At present, industrial staff organization is of the Navy integrated staff type, or consists of Army type special staffs. There may or may not be a coordinator of these different staff departments depending on their number. The use of a Chief of Staff would in many cases be of great advantage to a business. A line executive with eight or ten staff departments reporting directly to him is definitely in an impossible position in respect to assimilating their ideas into one decision. One of the advantages of military staff action is that the completed staff work presented to the Commander has been fully coordinated by the Chief of Staff. Without such a coordinating agency in a business it is apparent that various staff departments would have to resort to a committee system in order to get together on completed staff action. This is ponderous, slow, and lacking in decisive results. For smaller business concerns the functions of the Chief of Staff could be incorporated in the duties of an executive assistant. An executive could then examine completed staff work, could work any revisions necessary with one man instead of several, and issue any orders for staff work to be done to one man instead of many. Staff action should be designed to save an executive time and effort, not add to his administrative duties.

The general staff-special staff concept of the Army could be used advantageously by very large industrial enterprises. It should be remembered that the general staff is concerned with all aspects of the command, not just technical problems. A large corporation such as General Motors which has approximately sixteen separate technical staff departments in its central offices might



profit under a General Staff system. These staffs would be divided into about four groups depending upon whether their functions pertained to control, service, coordination, etc. Then these groups could be headed by executives who would make up the general staff. In this situation the general staff could then, as a unit, deal in the general problems of the president, calling upon the staffs in their group for information, research, and completed staff work. Possibly the fact that industry does not have to face recurring problems whose solution depends upon coordinated action of all staff departments, as in the military, has lessened the requirement for a general staff. In companies that have a very large number of staff departments, some coordinating group such as a general staff is desirable.

It is generally agreed that the objectives and functions of a staff in the military and in industry are quite similar. However, it is believed that this purpose could be strengthened in industry by the use of a coordinating staff agency, by utilizing a position comparable to the Chief of Staff, more clearly defining staff responsibilities, and by educating line officers in the use of the staff. Any improvement in human relations accompanying these refinements would be another step towards effective staff action.



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