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Letters

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LETTERS

COMMENTS · CRITICISMS
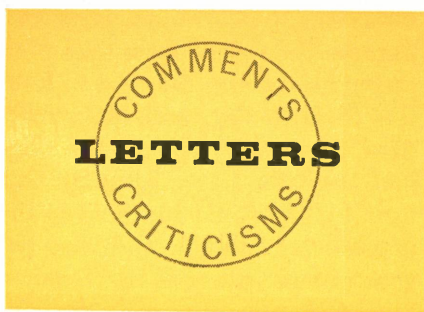
Need for data

I was particularly interested in the article by Joe F. Moore ("What Operations Research Means to the Accountant," M/S, November-December, '66, p. 52) and would like to add a few comments.

Frequently the operations research (OR) study begins with a preliminary feasibility study to gather sufficient data to define the problem clearly. At this stage no problem is said to exist, but the "symptoms" of a problem are recognizable.

The information gathering phase referred to in Mr. Moore's article is thus a preliminary step, and the so-called "OR process" or "application of scientific method" becomes a feedback process or a model in itself. Once sufficient data have been gathered to define or pinpoint the real "problem," the process repeats itself and data must be gathered again to solve this new problem. Thus, the circularity and repetition of the OR process are very important.

Mr. Moore's comment that "the management information system could be considered to include mathematical models and simulations that reflect the effects of certain decisions on operations and on corporate profitability" had particular significance to me. All too often the MIS is not acknowledged as a useful tool of operations researchers or management scientists, but since it is in fact the goal of OR practitioners to aid management decision making in any way possible, the MIS becomes one of our most useful tools. Without the availability of good accounting data and the type of corporate information system that Mr. Moore advocates we OR practitioners will be severely handicapped in our efforts to aid management decision making.

Gerald R. McNichols
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Air vs. rail

In the article, "Distribution Cost Analysis" (M/S, September-October, '66, p. 52), Mrs. Dora Herring states that "the incremental cost of shipping by air rather than by rail freight should be compared with the demand elasticity of the product to determine whether prices can be set to cover such increased cost and also yield additional profit."

Assuming that "increased cost" indicates an upward shift in the variable and fixed costs curve rather than a change in the function itself, it should be obvious from Mrs. Herring's flexible breakeven chart that, for any given demand function, maximum profits are only possible using that cost function which minimizes costs. The demand elasticity is irrelevant in determining which mode of shipping should be used.

Mrs. Herring's example could have contributed significantly to the discussion had she considered the possibility of effecting shifts of the demand curve using differing shipping modes. In any discussion of demand and/or cost functions the effects of movements of, and movements along, any given function must be carefully differentiated.

Albert B. Aftoora
Internal Audit Officer
The Chesapeake and Ohio
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Cleveland, Ohio

Clarification

In reply to Mr. Aftoora's letter, I think his criticism is well taken in that I have not differentiated carefully enough between movements of and movements along the demand function.

In making this statement, I had in mind shifts in the demand curve because of a different shipping

mode and changes in demand elasticity which would occur. Perhaps I should have elaborated, although any elaboration would probably be an article in itself.

Mrs. Dora Herring
Mississippi State University
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Perpetual calendar

Your calendar article ("Why an Ancient Calendar in the Jet Age?" by Doris Cook, M/S, September-October, '66, p. 35) was of considerable interest. However, it is surprising that she used the World Calendar instead of the Perpetual Calendar (see opposite page) as an example, since the latter plan is now the leading proposal for a twelve-month equal-quarter calendar.

The old World Calendar association closed its offices in 1956, and the thirteen-period calendar lost its backing with the death of George Eastman (of Kodak) in 1932. The Perpetual Calendar is the only calendar proposal that has received any official U. S. A. endorsement. It was endorsed by the legislature of Hawaii in 1943 and by the general court of Massachusetts in 1952. . . . It was voted on by the Vatican Ecumenical Council in October, 1963, with 2,057 votes for and only four against the resolution.

Since tax accounting, scheduling, calculations, comparisons, etc., are done quarterly, the Perpetual Calendar with four equal quarters has been called by its supporters the most practical, efficient, and scientific proposal for civil use all over the world. It has 26 working days in each month, counting Saturdays, whereas February always has 24 and March, 1967, has 27 in the Gregorian Calendar.

All holidays may become fixed

in the Perpetual Calendar on a Monday or a Friday, and there are more natural three-day holidays in this proposal than in any other. This will aid greatly in all business, transportation, and school and college planning.

The Perpetual Calendar has all the advantages of the so-called World Calendar (proposed by a Canadian accountant, Octavius Smith, in 1925) without its disadvantages. The World Calendar has an awkward Year-End Day, a Good Friday on April 13, and four Friday the Thirteenths each year. It wastes the thirty-first day of the first month of each quarter instead of placing that day in the third month, at the end of each quarter, where it can be readily and effectively used for quarterly accounting, tax reporting, etc.

As for the so-called Universal (thirteen-period) Calendar, it is surprising that a researcher would fail to attribute it to Moses Cotsworth, an English statistician and accountant, who proposed this plan in 1895. The *Look* article referred to has several false and rather silly claims, one of which was noted by a commentator in your November-December issue.

A great deal of present-day accounting is done on a quarterly basis, and the most unfortunate drawback of the thirteen-month calendar is that it is not divisible into quarters and half-years of full months. Furthermore, people simply do not like the number thirteen because of its lack of divisibility into other units. (Some are superstitious about it.) Use of such a plan would increase the annual costs of monthly billing and comparison work by at least one-twelfth of present costs.

There is actually no "historic

continuity" of the week (or of the Sabbath). It has been broken many times. The week originated in Babylon from observation that the moon regularly has four quarters of approximately seven days each, plus a day and a half of darkness. I learned at the Vatican Library that for a long time Friday was considered as the Sabbath (seventh day) by Christians, Jews, and pagans. The day of abstinence from eating meat comes down to us from this Sabbath day, and Mohammedans adopted Friday as the original Sabbath. Later Saturday was used by Christians and Jews as the seventh-day Sabbath, and some pagan groups changed to Sunday. Sunday is now shown as the seventh day of the week in many European calendars.

In Constantine's time, the Christian Sabbath was changed from Saturday to Sunday, mainly to get pagan converts to Christianity. No weekdays by name as we now know them were ever mentioned in the Bible. The Sabbath was supposedly given by Moses to the Israelites 2,513 years after the Creation (according to Bishop Usher's chronology), as noted in Exodus 16:23. This is the first time the word Sabbath is used in the Bible, and claims that it has been observed ever since the first day of Creation are simply ridiculous.

Every day of the week has, at one time, been the Sabbath in the various religions of the world. Minority religious groups will never agree on any one fixed calendar. It is hardly fair of them to try to impose their sabbatarian views on the vast majority when these minorities are entirely free to follow their own sectarian calendars if they so choose.

We need a fixed calendar, with

The Perpetual Calendar

1st QUARTER — N.Y.D 1st

JANUARY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

FEBRUARY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

MARCH

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

2nd QUARTER

APRIL

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

MAY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

JUNE

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

3rd QUARTER — L.Y.D 3rd

JULY

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

AUGUST

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

SEPTEMBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

4th QUARTER

OCTOBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

NOVEMBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

DECEMBER

M	T	W	T	F	S	S
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

New Year's Day (N. Y. D.) precedes Monday, January 1, as a holiday apart. It is the first day of each year and the third day of an annual three-day weekend. It is followed by the 364-day calendar shown at left.

Leap Year Day (L. Y. D.) comes between June 31 and July 1 in leap years as a second holiday apart. These two Year Days (N. Y. D. and L. Y. D.) are definitely named and have a definite purpose. Considered apart from any week or month, they allow the calendar to become fixed and perpetual.

one day apart every year and two in leap years. Any so-called year of 52 even weeks (364 days), with an occasional 53-week year (371 days), would certainly disrupt accounting, scheduling, comparisons, and dating, and it would be highly unsatisfactory for civil purposes.

The Perpetual Calendar is proposed for adoption beginning with New Year's Day, 1973. (It can be most conveniently introduced following any year that ends on a Saturday or a Sunday.)

We have one clock in worldwide civil use. Let us have one standard international civil perpetual calendar. They both simply record time.

Dr. Willard E. Edwards
Honolulu, Hawaii