

**LECTURES ON ORGANIZATION:
DELIVERED IN THE COURSE ON
INDUSTRIAL ORGANIZATION
IN THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF
BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION OF THE
HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

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Lectures on Organization: Delivered in the Course on Industrial Organization in the graduate school of business administration of the Harvard University by Russell Robb

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ORGANIZATION AS AFFECTED BY PURPOSE AND CONDITIONS

As an industry or business begins to involve large size, great numbers, and complexity, organization becomes necessary simply for the direction, control, and handling of affairs, quite aside from any question of direct economy. It becomes necessary to set off groups of workers, to divide responsibilities, duties, and processes, so that affairs may be kept within the scope and ability of those who are directing the undertaking. A virtue has, however, been made of this necessity for division, because it becomes possible, by dividing duties and functions, to conserve special skill, ability, and use, and to direct all effort into definite paths, to which it becomes accustomed and thus gains in efficiency.

It is of little importance how the great growth in industries has come, — whether a realization of the benefits that arise with division of labor and conserving of skill induced us to gain size so that these advantages might be brought into play, or whether size came first and the advantages were a fortuitous accompaniment. It seems, however, to be true in most cases that the need for having matters more

thoroughly in hand, the need for better command of affairs by administrative officers, usually results in a division that makes plainer the lines of authority, that places responsibility more definitely, and secures discipline, while in the consideration of the economies to be secured in the different parts of the organization, attention is more often given to questions of division of duties to secure specialization in skill and plant, to the limiting of duties to functions instead of parts only.

If, for instance, one were suddenly required to organize a body of thousands of men to clear the streets of a city from an abnormally heavy fall of snow, it is probable that these men would be divided into divisions, each with a chief, and that these divisions would be divided into squads, each with a foreman. The division would be divided into similar kinds of units, headed by men in absolute authority over their units and with no collateral relations to cause complications and delay. The organization would be for the purpose of control, for the purpose of intimate command and effective direction. If, however, one were to organize a great industrial establishment to manufacture machines that had very close competition both as to quality and price, the greatest care would have to be given in the organization to the different functions in the manufacture, and to the segregation of such functions as designing, purchasing, and selling, so that every advantage could be taken of special knowledge and specialization of effort.

Other activities that are not industrial, such as the church, the civil government, the army, the navy, educational organizations, charitable organizations, all involve size and numbers and complexity, and they are all organized; but good industrial organization will be likely to differ from these other organizations, and all organizations will differ somewhat from each other, because the objects, the results that are sought, and the way these results must be attained, are different; and, moreover, the material out of which the organization is made, differs in kind.

It is, of course, true that there is much that is common to all effective endeavor: the definite knowledge of what one wishes to accomplish; the principles of directing and controlling effectively large numbers of people; making the most of different kinds of skill; the securing of coöperation, so that each one helps instead of hinders another; the systematic and orderly way of doing things, so that there are no neglected steps, no false movements, no lost time—are all common to good organizations of all kinds. But, with differing purposes, the factors that make organization have varying importance. With one purpose in view, the principle of the division of labor for specialization of skill may be all-important; in another situation, this may become insignificant in comparison with the proper control and direction of large numbers. The problem in another organization may be the systematization and division of work mainly to bring order and efficiency into a situation

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